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LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

VOLUME TWO

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MME. DE SÉVIGNÉ

by Nanteuil

(Musée Carnavalet)

LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

TO HER DAUGHTER AND HER FRIENDS

Selected, with an Introductory Essay

by RICHARD ALDINGTON

WITH AN APPENDIX OF BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION, AND AN INDEX

VOLUME II



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LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, ETC.

LETTER CXXI

Madame De Sévigné to the Countess de Grignan

Vichy, Monday, September 6, 1677.

Be not uneasy, my child ; I write to you at six in the evening, at a distance from the water, and free from any sort of vapour. I do it, that I may indulge myself in the pleasure of chatting with you a little while, as I have given up every other correspondence. Do you not think we are both at too great a distance, and too far from each other ? This distance is a real evil to both. I pass the day with M. de Termes[1] and Flamarens ; I am their only comfort ; I know not what ails them, but they are certainly both very far from well. They brought one of the musicians belonging to the opera with them ; he plays better than Baptiste, and amuses us highly. There is, besides, a little impertinent hump-backed fellow, who is always singing, and who imagines himself an admirable performer ; he is a perpetual source of laughter to us. M. de Champlatreux is our grand Druid, and keeps the best house in the universe. Good heavens ! why could I not have been under your management at this place ? M. and Madame d'Albon, a sister of Mademoiselle de l'Estrange, the fair Madame de Sourdis, with a thousand others of all ranks and denominations are here : never was there seen such a multitude of company, or such a series of fine weather ; the month of September has neither the extremes of winter nor of summer, and this is the finest September you ever saw. Madame said the other day to Madame de Ludre, whilst she was playing with a pair of compasses, " I must certainly pluck out those two eyes of yours, that do so much mischief." " Out with

[1] Cesar Auguste de Pardillan, Marquis de Termes, long attached to Gaston d'Orléans, and engaged in the intrigues of the Fronde, had quitted the Court. He was handsome, well made, a man of wit, very lively, very mischievous, and of a very bad character.

them ! for they have not done half the mischief I wished." It would be pleasant enough if I were to send you all the witticisms that have been said by that beauty. How are you, my beloved ? and what is become of the pain you complained of in your leg ? Is it possible this could really have been of any service to you ? It must then have been some humour that might have fallen upon your lungs, and not a mere overheating of blood. And pray is the poor little girl recovered ? If you love me, my dear, if you really love me, endeavour to grow fat. Ah, how thin you must be, since even M. de Grignan complains of it.

Tuesday evening.

I have received your letter of the first of September. What would you have, my child ? What exchange or barter do you wish me to make ? Ah ! keep what you have, and think what you are, when you are not devoured by all the dragons in the world. You had some very black and cruel ones at Paris ; but when you please, what a fund of pleasure and delight do not we find in your good humour ! I often sigh when I mention your name, and when I think of you. I do not answer your letter, merely because I would not vex you ; for you deprive me of the joy of my life, in depriving me of the pleasure of conversing with you. But you must not be contradicted ; you pass very lightly over many things ; and I, on the other hand, make no answer to them at all. I only beg you to inform D'Hacqueville of your plan for the winter, that we may know whether we are to take the Hôtel de Carnavalet, or not. I likewise entreat you to take care of your health : mine is admirably good ; the waters agree with me perfectly. Vincent is one of my governors, as well as Champlatreux : everything is settled with the strictest order and regularity : we all dine at noon, sup at seven, go to bed at ten, and rise to drink the waters at six.

I wish you could see to what an excess the presence of de Termes and Champlatreux has carried the head-dress, and other ornaments, of two or three belles of this country. In short, from six in the morning, every creature is abroad, with fashionable head-dresses, powdered, curled, see-saw

caps, paint, patches, little pendent coifs, fans, long ſtrait ſtays ; in ſhort, it is truly ridiculous. Yet, for all that, the waters muſt be drunk ; and they return again from the mouth, and by perſpiration, very plentifully.

LETTER CXXII

To the Same

Vichy, Sunday, September 19, 1677.

I fancy, my dear child, that my laſt was a ſtrange ſort of letter. I was uncomfortable, I wrote with pain, from the effects of the pump : this was enough to alarm you. I aſſure you I am perfectly well to-day ; I bathed myſelf a little in the Seneca ſtyle ; I ſweated very plentifully, and ſhall perhaps uſe the pump once or twice more before I go, in order to put an end to all diſputes. Two days' repoſe will give me ſtrength ſufficient. I fancied the other day, in the heat of the engagement, that I cloſed my hands ; I can now cut bread, and, in ſhort, am quite well ; time will accompliſh that part of the cure which Vichy has left undone, and I am in no ſort of uneaſineſs about the matter. I quit the Chevalier and Vichy on Friday ; I leave him in a fair way to do well, and conſign the care of his health to excellent hands. We intend to reſt at Langlar, where the Chevalier is to come to ſee us. One day can do him no great harm. I rather think de Termes and Flamarens will accompany him ; this will be a very pretty pauſe. Juſſac wiſhes to write to you, to inform you how much he reſpects you, and how much M. de Vendôme is diſpoſed to love and eſteem you, and to believe M. de Grignan in everything he ſays ; at leaſt, if he be not very much changed ſince, which Juſſac cannot believe.

Marſeilles is at Paris ; we have talked a great deal about paſt affairs ; I think I painted them to the life. I wiſh, my beloved child, you would be ſincere with me with regard to your health. I ſee you do all you can to make me eaſy ; but when I recollect how dexterouſly you deceive me when you please, I do not place all my confidence on your words.

I am of opinion that in illness a regimen should be observed, and I flatter myself you will grant so much to our friendship as to follow some of the rules prescribed by Grisoni.

D'Hacqueville higgles so much about the affair of the Hôtel de Carnavalet, that I tremble leſt he should let it slip. Good heavens! what need of all this niggardliness for the trifling consideration of six months? Can we better ourselves? Write to him as I shall do to beg he would have the goodness not to make use of his profound judgment on this occasion. The Chevalier and I often talk of you; we are more apprehensive than you can be of the vivacity of your disposition, which waſtes and exhauſts you like Pascal. Did you but know my child what an impression this makes on the minds of those who love you, you would certainly pity us. The *worthy* takes the waters in order to empty his budget, which is full; which is equivalent to saying, in order to fill it, and keep it so; we take great care of each other. These waters are so very salutary that M. de Grignan might be at once washed, bleached, and cured of all his disorders by them; it would be no bad management in him too, to think of emptying his budget. All our topers are satisfied as to their health, and more so with the fine weather and the beauty of the country. Adieu, my dearest and moſt amiable child! I am sure you now wish me to resign my pen. Do you not find it a great amusement to see the Marquis profit by the lessons of M. de la Garde? this puts me in mind of my pretty little boy of La Palisse. The Chevalier will tell you, we are sometimes so much engaged with company that, for want of time, we put off taking our medicines till we get to Paris.

LETTER CXXIII

To the Same

Gien, Friday, October 1, 1677.

We took a trip to-day after dinner, which you would have been much pleased to have taken with us. In the afternoon we were to have taken leave of our good company, and set out

each on a different road, some towards Paris, and others towards Autri. This good company not being sufficiently prepared for this dismal separation had not the power to support it, and would absolutely accompany us to Autri. We laid before them all the inconveniences attending such a ſtep, but being overpowered, were obliged to yield. We all passed the Loire at Châtillon : the weather was fine, and we were delighted to see the ferry-boat return to take in the carriages. Whilſt we were on board, the conversation turned on the road to Autri ; they told us it was two long leagues, conſiſting of rocks, woods, and precipices. We, who had been accuſtomed to such fine roads ever since we left Moulins, were somewhat alarmed at this account ; and the good company and ourselves repassed the river ready to die with laughing at this little alteration ; all our people shared in the jeſt, and in this gay humour we took the road to Gien, where we all are at present. After consulting our pillows, which will in all likelihood advise us to make a bold ſtroke at a separation, we shall go, our good company their way, and we ours.

Yeſterday evening, at Cosne, we visited a real hell, in which are the forges of Vulcan. Here we found eight or ten Cyclops forging, not armour for Æneas, but anchors for ships. You never saw the blows of hammers redound so exactly, or with so beautiful a cadence. We were in the midſt of four furnaces ; these demons sometimes surrounded us on all sides, melting in sweat, with pale faces, glaring eyes, muſtachios like bears, long, black, and bushy hair ; this was a sight to terrify persons less polite than ourselves. For my own part, I saw no possibility of refusing to comply with the will and pleasure of these gentry in their infernal regions. At length we got out by the help of a shower of silver, with which we took care to refresh them, to facilitate our escape.

We saw, the evening before, at Nevers, the boldeſt race you ever beheld : four ladies in a coach, happening to see us pass in ours, were seized with so ſtrong a desire to behold us once more, that they muſt needs get before us, whilſt we were travelling on a road which was never intended for more than one carriage. My child, their coachman

passed us so rashly, and so closely, as almoſt to brush our whiskers ; they were within two fingers' breadth of tumbling into the river : we all cried out, "Lord, have mercy !" they burſt into a laugh, and kept galloping on before and above us in so frightful a manner, that we have scarce recovered our panic to this hour. These, my child, are our moſt remarkable adventures ; for, to tell you that the country is wholly occupied in the vintage, would be no very surprising news in the month of September. Had you been in Noah's case, as you said the other day, we should have been in no such a dilemma. I muſt say a word of my health : it is as good as you could wish ; the waters have performed wonders, and I find you have made a bugbear of the pump. Had I foreseen this, I should have been more on my guard how I mentioned it to you : it gave me nothing like a headache, only I thought I felt my throat a little heated ; and as I did not sweat much the firſt time, I held it certain that I had no need of that degree of perspiration I underwent laſt year, so I contented myself with large draughts, by which I find myself perfectly recovered ; there is nothing to compare with these waters.

LETTER CXXIV

To the Same

Paris, Friday, October 15, 1677.

We have been at Livri for these two days ; Madame de Coulanges, who is quite well, doing the honours of the house, and I the company. We had the Abbé Têtu and Corbinelli with us : Mademoiselle de Méri, who was returning from La Trousse, came there too, thinking to spend some days with Madame de Coulanges ; but this lady has ended her campaign, and we all returned yeſterday to Paris. Mademoiselle de Méri went directly to Madame de Mereuil's, for her own house was, it seems, in complete disorder ; and Madame de Coulanges, the Abbé Têtu and I, paid some visits in the

country, like Madame de la Fayette at Saint Maur, and Madame de Schomberg at Rambouillet. I thought of sleeping at Madame de Coulanges's, but for that night only. I returned here to visit the good Abbé, who has been bled, and is still much indisposed with his cold. I am sorry I could not help leaving him for this little moment. We live quite in the open air; all my people are busy as bees in packing up for our removal. I encamped in my own bed-chamber; and am now in that of the *worthy*, my whole furniture being a little table, on which I now write to you, and that is sufficient: I fancy we shall all be pleased with our Hôtel de Carnavalet. We think it strange not to have seen de Termes, though we have been home these nine days; it is easy to guess he has returned to his college, and that his regent gives him not a moment's relaxation. I am not at all sorry, as you may very well suppose, and shall not reproach him for it: but ask the Chevalier, whether, after the great pleasure he took in talking with me at Vichy, such extreme indifference be not very singular. It would certainly be very indiscreet, if the lady stood in need of being directed; and such conduct would be something to talk of: but it is impossible to do her any injury. I thought he seemed quite delighted at Vichy, on account of the evacuation, as you say, and to be with a good sort of woman, in full assurance of having no demands made upon him. This repose charmed him: there is sometimes great pleasure in passing from one extreme to another. He was mightily taken with the perpetual gossip of Vichy: you see what the consequence of this has been, at which I am under no sort of concern, but I tell it you as I do a thousand things else. When excess and imprudence are pushed to a certain extreme, I am persuaded they are more injurious to men than women; at least their fortunes are always sure to pay considerably for it. But let us leave de Termes under the ferula; there is a good deal to be said of another *old ferula*,[1] which discovers its severity

[1] This *old ferula* is apparently the Marchioness de Castelnau, who was long and publicly the mistress of M. de Termes. The *Amours des Gaules*, in which this is found, have very much defamed the Marquis. If this part was written by Bussy as well as the rest, he must have been very wicked, for his letters show that the

too much. As for you, my child, you enjoy a real vacation, and make an admirable use of the fine weather ; to dine at home in your own house is a very extraordinary affair : you write me from Rochecourbière—what a pretty place to date from ! what a delightful grotto ! How amiable you are, to remember me at that delightful place and to be sorry I am not there to share its pleasures with you ! Let us leave Providence to dispose of affairs at its pleasure : we shall see one another again, my love ; in the meantime I shall prepare to receive you at Carnavalet, where I shall again have the pleasure of rendering you a thousand little services which are of no real importance ; but I am happy in the opportunity because you wrote me word the other day that little attentions were a stronger proof of friendship than any other ; it is true, we cannot set too high a value upon them : self-love has certainly too large a share in what we do on great occasions. *Tender interest is swallowed up in pride* ; this is an idea of yours which I would not for the world deprive you of, as I find my account in it but too well.

I am, in regard to the loss of Bayard, precisely in the same disposition you guessed I was. Madame de la Fayette is utterly inconsolable. I have presented your compliments to her. She was then living on a milk diet, which she has discontinued on account of its turning acid on her stomach ; so that we have lost this sole ground of hope of the recovery of her desperate state of health. That of M. de Maine is certainly far from being good. He is at Versailles, where no one has seen him ; they say he walks worse than he did. In short, I really fancy there is something in it. Madame de Montespan went the other day to sleep at Maintenon, thinking at first of only going half-way there, in order to meet Madame de Maintenon. The King got into his carriage at midnight, to meet Madame de Montespan, when he received a courier, who informed him she was at Maintenon. She returned

Marquis de Termes was his steady friend. He also possessed all the requisites to excite his jealousy. He was one of those in whom Boileau acknowledged a superior mind. "M. de Termes," said he, "is always of the opinion of others, and this is true politeness." (*Vide La Boleana.*)



FRANÇOISE ATHENAÏS DE ROCHECHOUART DE MORTEMART

Marquise de Montespan

next day ; all this passed for a ramble, as it often happens. The Countess de Grammont is talked of as one of the ephemera.

Mademoiselle de Thianges [1] will be married by proxy of M. de Lavardin for the Duke of Sforza, in a month or six weeks. It is a strange affair to leave the place where she now resides, in order to be in one of the most inconsiderable courts in Italy. You may possibly ask me, why does M. de Lavardin espouse her ? It is because he is related to that Duke, and has been chosen to represent him. La Bagnols informs me she does not go to Grignan, and that you will be under the necessity of parting with Madame de Rochebonne and the Chevalier. So then it seems you walk by moonlight. So much the better, my child ; it is a sign you are in good health, since you are suffered to do so. Is it possible to form a more advantageous opinion of those who have a real affection for you, and who take care of your health ? My health is perfectly good ; I am still in hopes we shall pass some little time after this at Livri, but then it must be when the *worthy* is perfectly recovered. I embrace M. de Grignan and M. de la Garde. I conjure you, if you really intend to come, not to wait till the breaking up of these horrible roads. I fancy the wind begins to blow with an *autumnal* sharpness, as the almanac says. Pray where do you leave your son ? I cannot easily comprehend how you dispose of that vicar of Saint Esprit. Does he come to Grignan ? You know how severe they are on the poor curate. And Paulina ? I should be glad to *patronize* her. I am uneasy, like you, respecting her godfather [2] ; this thought is perfectly afflicting me. You cannot conceive what a loss this would be. We ought to pray that God will preserve him to us. He fatigues, exhausts, and absolutely destroys himself ; he is never free from a slow fever ; I think no one is so much concerned on his account as I am. In short, except a quarter of an hour that he is employed in feeding his trout, he passes his time in philosophical quibbles and subtleties with Don Robert, which

[1] Louise Adelaide Damas, daughter of Claude Leonor Marquis de Thianges, and Gabrielle Rochechouart-Mortemart, and sister of Madame de Montespan.

[2] Cardinal de Retz.

entirely destroy him. You will perhaps say, "Why does he destroy himself thus?" But what the plague would you have him do with himself? In vain does he bestow a certain portion of his time in the concerns of the church; he has still too much left. Adieu, my dear child! adieu, all my dear Grignans! They are taking away my inkstand, my paper, my table, and my chair. O then, pack up as fast as you will, I am on my legs.

The young Mademoiselle [1] has a quartan ague, for which she is very sorry, as it interrupts all the pleasures of this winter. She was the other day at the convent of the Carmelites; she asked them, whether they had any cure for an ague: she had neither governess nor subgoverness with her. They gave her a beverage that caused her to vomit a good deal; which occasioned a great deal of conversation. The Princess wanted to conceal who had given her this remedy, which was at last discovered. The King said, turning with an air of gravity to Monsieur, "Ah, the Carmelites! I knew they were a set of cheats, stocking-menders, embroiderers, and flower-makers, but I never knew before that they dealt in poison." The earth trembled at these words; all the devotees fled into the country; the Queen was very little moved at it; in short, what is said cannot be recalled, any more than we can alter the belief and sentiments of the public, who pretend to a right to criticize everything that is said or done. Thus must be allowed to be somewhat original.

The *worthy* embraces you; I really think him far from well. Had we been at Grignan, it would have been a fine affair. My writing is bad; but my pen is worse; it scrawls, and makes nothing but pot-hooks and hangers, so here it goes, with the other rubbish.

[1] Maria Louisa d'Orléans, afterwards Queen of Spain in 1679.

LETTER *CXXV

Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

Paris, October 23, 1677.

I returned from Vichy four days ago. I brought with me an affectionate remembrance of your friendship, of your charming conversation, of the beauty of Chaseu, and of the merit of my niece de Coligny, whom I admire and love.[1] Among so many good things, I regret that I did not ask you to show me your Memoirs, which suit my taste exactly. I cannot imagine how I could forget it. I am very glad that you found something to say to me on your side. Your love then was rekindled in seeing me? It is a good sign when friendship is increased by meeting. For my part, I think we love each other more than we suppose. This P... was rather disagreeable, God have mercy on her soul. It was necessary, as you say, to quarter well with her. When she was at the point of death last year, I said, seeing her sad recovery and decrepitude: "Good Heavens! she will die twice in a short time." Was I not right? Patrix[2] was recovering from a very severe fit of illness at the age of eighty; his friends were one day rejoicing at the event, and entreated him to get up: "Alas, gentlemen," said he, "it is scarcely worth while to dress myself again." How delighted I was, my dear cousin, with this reply! But I fear I have already told you the story. Well thought of: you wish me to condole with you on the death of the grand-prior of Champagne. I am very willing to do so, and if I should add some others, I am certain my consolation would have all the efficacy imaginable. Do you remember what you once said to me on a similar subject?

[1] Madame de Sévigné had spent the beginning of September with M. de Bussy.

[2] Patrix was a literary man attached to Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII. He died at a very advanced age. He was the author of the well-known epigram:

"Je songeois cette nuit que, de mort consumé," etc.

I dreamt that, buried in my fellow-clay, etc.

that you had waited a long time for my letter, but having seen it was slow in coming, you consoled yourself alone as well as you could. My coachman was comforted by the lamentable story of M. Jannin's overturn. It was a fine affair in comparison with ours. I was informed of it upon the road, and wrote to M. Jannin ; for a fracture deserves a compliment. I have laughed heartily with Corbinelli at the way in which our two uncles fell upon my niece Coligny and myself. Our poor Corbinelli has been near death ! He took potable gold, which saved his life by throwing him into a perspiration, that carried off his fever. There is nothing like being rich : a beggar would have died.

They talk of a sort of victory obtained by Marshal de Créqui.[1] He has beaten the Germans. Did you ever hear of so brilliant a star as the King's ? You know he has given a pension of two thousand crowns to Racine and Despréaux, commanding them at the same time to write his history, and he will take care to furnish them with materials. Adieu, my dear cousin.

LETTER *CXXVI

To the Same

Livri, November 3, 1677.

I am come here to pass the fine weather, and bid adieu to the leaves : they are still upon the trees, but have changed their hue : instead of being green they are of the colours of Aurora, and of so many different shades, that they form a rich and magnificent gold drapery, which would be more beautiful than green, if it did not portend their fall. I am at Carnavalet. It is a large handsome house ; I wish to remain here some time, for the removal has fatigued me a good deal. I am in expectation of the beautiful Countess, who will be very glad

[1] On the 24th of September, Marshal de Créqui obliged the Prince of Saxony and Senac to surrender (*Memoires chronologiques de d'Avrigny*). He also obtained another less important advantage on the 7th of October.

to hear that you have not forgotten her. What you say of Despréaux and Racine is very just. The King said to them, a few days ago, "I am sorry you were not at the last campaign: you would have seen the war, and your journey would not have been very long." "Sire," said Racine, "we had no dress ready for the campaign, ours were only fit for the town; but we ordered some to be made, and the places you attacked were taken before they could be brought home." This was very well received. You know the King has appointed M. le Tellier chancellor; everybody is pleased at this choice. He is perfectly competent to his situation. What a fortunate family this has been! my niece, de Coligny, ought to be very happy. Still there is a little quartan ague that shows but too plainly she is one of us. What you say of old P..., who ought to have died out of hand when she was ill a short time before her death, has been more than a match for me. I am not yet satisfied that we did not read your Memoirs the afternoon we spent on the banks of that pretty river. I shall hardly be able to dispense with them till next year. If I die in the interval, I shall add this to my other regrets at leaving the world. The good Abbé and I often talk of your hospitality, of the beautiful situation of Chaseu, and of the charms of your society; and add, that it is grievous that we should meet so rarely.

LETTER *CXXVII

To the Same

Paris, March 18, 1678.

What say you, my dear cousin, to the conquest of Gand? A King of France had not been seen there for a long time. Our present sovereign is so admirable, that he deserves to have you for his historian. There needs neither fable nor fiction to raise him above all other kings; nothing is necessary but a plain unvarnished style, like yours. This is continually in my head.

The King's historians follow the army. They are little accustomed to fatigue. I am informed that they are very much surprised at finding themselves both on foot and on horseback, in mud to their very ears; they now know by experience how little pleasure there is in sleeping under the rays of the beautiful mistress of Endymion. They pay their court by the astonishment they express at the numerous legions which compose the formidable army of the King. They are all surprised too at fatigues which are but too real, and under this impression they said the other day to the King, that they no longer wondered that soldiers so easily hazarded their lives, since they had reason to wish them at an end. They are also punsters. For instance: the King dislikes perfumes, but the Spanish glove [1] he has taken, they say, will not give him the headache. I add, that a Prince less wise and great would probably not be free from giddiness on such an occasion. These are poor things to tell you, my dear cousin, but my pen has written them all without my consent.

They are now before Ypres, [2] and I am alarmed at it, for this place is crammed with soldiers, though two thousand men have left it to go to Bruges, because they know not where the King may fall. Every town trembles. With all this we shall have peace, I suppose, or Flanders.

But a word of Madame de Seignelai, who died the day before yesterday in childbed with a son. Fortune has struck a bold stroke in thus daring to offend M. Colbert. He and all his family are inconsolable. What an ample subject for reflection! This great heiress so much wished for, and secured at length under such a variety of circumstances, is dead at the age of eighteen. *The Princess of Cleves* has scarcely lived longer; but she will not be so soon forgotten. This is a little book Barbin gave us ten days ago, which appears to me one of the most charming things I have ever read.

[1] Gand, the name of the place, is French for glove.

[2] Ypres was taken as well as Gand. These victories, together with those obtained in Germany by Marshal de Créqui, and by Marshal de Navailles in Spain, determined the conclusion of peace, which was signed at Nimeguen, on the 11th of August following. It was the most glorious peace France had ever made at this epoch.

I suppose my niece, the Canoness, will send it to you soon. I shall ask your opinion of it when you and the amiable widow have read it. It seems too soon for you to go to Chaseu. Are not your meadows and your pretty river still frozen? You have certainly taken four or five days of March sunshine for summer, but they will soon show you as they have shown us, that they are gay deceivers.

I know not how you can like my letters; they are written in a style of carelessness, which I feel, without being able to remedy it. But the reason is more distant, and proceeds from your love of me. You do well, my dear cousin, and I conjure you to persevere without fearing that you love one who is ungrateful. I say the same to you, my dear niece. Send me an account of your amusements, and what you are reading. This it is that consoles us for the irksomeness of solitude. But is either of you to be pitied? No, indeed; you have society enough in each other when you are together. I like La Hire, and his reply to his master exceedingly. It is very elegant and well-turned.[1] I think you would have said the same thing to Charles VII, for with regard to our present King, you have no reason to say so to him. My daughter is a little better; she sends a thousand remembrances to you and my niece.

LETTER *CXXVIII

To the Same

Paris, October 12, 1678.

I have received two of your letters, my dear cousin. In one you tell me your mode of life, and how you amuse yourself. I think you are in very good company, and that you make an excellent use of everything that can contribute to render society delightful; if we were living under a less equitable

[1] "What think you of my dance?" said Charles the Seventh, to this warrior. "I think, sire," he replied, "that a kingdom could not have been lost more merrily." This is mentioned by Bussy in his letter.

reign, your agreeable exile might be changed, as it happened once to a Roman. It was discovered that he was living in the happiest manner possible, on an island where he was exiled ; and he was recalled to Rome, and condemned to live with his wife. I am glad that you and Madame de Coligny promise to love me. I am delighted to please and be esteemed by you both. My daughter, M. de. Corbinelli, and I talked of you a great deal the other day, and particularly of Madame de Coligny ; indeed, she was deservedly celebrated ; and what we most admired in her was the tenderness of her attachment to you, and the pleasure she takes in amusing your exile : that proceeds from a truly heroic soul. Mademoiselle de Scudéry says the true proportion of merit must be taken by the measure of the capacity to love. Judge thereby of your daughter's value. They also should be praised who are worthy of being loved. This regards you, my dear cousin.

I can besides answer for your incorruptibility as long as you are together.

M. de Luxembourg's army is not yet dispersed ; the attendants talk of the siege of Trèves or Juliers. I shall be in despair if I am obliged to turn my thoughts again to war. I should be very glad that neither my son nor my property were exposed to such glorious sufferings. It is melancholy to advance into the regions of misery, which is unavoidable with persons of your profession.

You know, I believe, that Madame de Meckelbourg, on her way to Germany, passed through her brother's [1] army. She was there three days, like Armida, in the midst of military honours, which are not quietly bestowed. I cannot imagine how she could have thought of me at such a time. She did more : she wrote me a very civil letter, which surprised me, as I have no correspondence with her. She might make ten campaigns and take ten journeys into Germany without thinking of me, and I should not consider I had any right to complain. I wrote her word that I had read of many Princesses being at the army, and making themselves admired and adored by all the Princes, who were so many lovers, but

[1] Marshal de Luxembourg.

that I had never heard of one who, in the midſt of this triumph, thought of writing to an old friend who had not even the quality of being in the confidence of Her Highness.

M. de Brandebourg and the Danes have so completely driven the Swedes out of Germany that the Elector has now nothing to do but to come and join our enemies. It is feared this will retard peace with the Germans.

"The Court is at St. Cloud; the King wishes to go to Versailles: but God, it seems, wills otherwise, by the impossibility of getting the buildings ready to receive him, and by the great mortality that prevails among the workmen, of whom there are every night wagons full of the dead carried out as from the Hôtel-Dieu. This melancholy ſtep is concealed as much as possible, in order not to alarm other workmen, and decry the air of this *unworthy favourite*. You are acquainted with this witticism upon Versailles." [1]

We have left Livri sooner than we wished, on account of a fever, which seized one of the Mesdemoiselles de Grignan very violently. We accuſtomed ourselves to the good place insensibly, and almoſt wept when we quitted our foreſt. The good Corbinelli keeps his room with a cold. My daughter's health, which gave us some hope of re-eſtablishment, is become worse, that is, is changed to extreme delicacy, but it does not prevent her from loving and honouring you.

LETTER *CXXIX

To the Same

Paris, February 27, 1679

You have spent the winter at Autun in excellent society. If I forgot in my firſt letter to mention the Bishop, I beg that I may repair my fault in this, and that he will be persuaded by you that I honour him perfectly, and that, believing him

[1] This fragment within inverted commas, which we take from the supplement of Bussy's works, a curious and scarce book, had been omitted in the collection of letters.

to rank highest among what is called good society here, I leave him to judge what I think of him in the country, and how happy I consider you in having passed some months with him. We have had insufferable snow and ice here : the streets were like roads broken into deep ruts. Within these few days we have begun to see the pavement, which had given us as much pleasure as the olive branch which showed that the earth was again visible. I think, however, you ought not to be in too much haste to return to your beautiful neighbourhood of Chaseu : it is much too soon ; the month of April introduces the spring.

My daughter is still languid ; her ill state of health is the greatest sorrow of my life. We are now employed in hearing fine sermons. Father Bourdaloüe thunders at St. Jacques de la Boucherie. He ought to preach in a more accessible place ; the throng and the carriages create so much confusion that the communication with that part of the town is quite interrupted.

Bishoprics and abbeys are distributing without number. A young Abbé de la Broue, who has preached only once before the King, is to have the Bishopric of Mirepoix ; M. de Tulle (Mascaron) that of Agen ; Father Saillan, of the Oratory, is nominated for Tréguier, the Abbé de Bourlement for Fréjus, the Abbé de Noailles for Cahors. M. de Marsan and the Chevalier de Tilladet are pensioners. The Abbé de la Fayette, and a brother of Marsillac, have abbeys. In short, some are content, and others not. There is nothing new in this : it is the world.

Have you heard of the mitigation that has taken place in the confinement of M. de Lauzun and M. Fouquet ? The permission they have obtained to see all those who are in the citadel, to see each other, and to eat and converse together, is perhaps one of the most sensible pleasures they will ever receive.

I was in a place the other day where things were freely discussed.[1] They opened prisons, recalled exiles, restored many things to their proper places, and removed

[1] Tailler en plein drap : to talk largely.

many which had been substituted for them. You were not forgotten in this change, and were spoken of very handsomely. This is all the information a letter can give you.

LETTER *CXXX

To the Same

Paris, July 20, 1679.

I have seen and conversed with the Bishop of Autun, and I do not wonder at the attachment of his friends to him. He has told me that he once passed Langeron, and that he would not even take off his boots there. He was there for six weeks. The place is well calculated to promote the gaiety, charms, and readiness, of his wit. I think I should be still more convinced of this, if I were better acquainted with him. We talked very much of you in the same way. I mentioned the letter you had written to the King : he told me he had seen it, and that he thought it a very good one. I think you very fortunate in having him. This happiness is reciprocal, and you are both good company. He will tell you the news, and the preparations that are making for the marriage of the King of Spain, and that the Prince and Princess d'Harcourt are chosen to conduct the Queen of Spain [1] to her husband, and of the office the King has given to M. de Marsillac without injury to the former (the Prince d'Harcourt). He will inform you that M. de Feuillade, a courtier surpassing all former courtiers, has procured a block of marble which occupied the whole length of the Rue St. Honoré, and that the soldiers who

[1] Mademoiselle, the daughter of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV, was married to Charles II, King of Spain. This was one of the conditions of peace, to which the young Princess barely assented. She had wished to marry the Dauphin. The King said to her : " I make you Queen of Spain ; what more could I do for my own daughter ? " " Ah," replied she, " you might do more for your niece ! " She died ten years afterwards. We shall have occasion to speak of her death, which excited so many suspicions.

brought it would not give way to the carriage of the Prince, though he himself was in it, and that there was a skirmish between the soldiers and the footmen : the mob interfered, the marble was drawn aside, and the Prince passed. The Bishop will also tell you that this marble is at M. de Feuillade's, who is raising Phidias or Praxiteles from the dead to carve the figure of the King on horseback, and that this ſtatue will coſt him more than thirty thouſand crowns.

It ſeems to me that this letter is not unlike the chapters of *Amadis : And how Tonquin d'Armorique was not other than René de Guingo. And how, having found his dear, he was at a loſs what to ſay to her.*

I am ſuch a libertine when I write that the firſt turn I take governs my whole letter. It were to be wiſhed that my poor pen, galloping as it does, would gallop at leaſt on a good footing. You would be leſs annoyed by it, Sir, and you, too, Madam, for I always addreſs you both, and embrace you both with all my heart. My daughter deſires me to add a thouſand remembrances for her. She is better ; but as there is no pure bliſs in the world, ſhe is thinking of returning to Provence, and I can only purchaſe the pleaſure of ſeeing her at the price of her ill-health. I muſt chooſe between theſe two evils, and fix upon abſence, bitter and hard as it is to bear. You are happy in being exempt from the pang of ſeparations. The departure of my ſon, who is going to encamp on the plains of Ouailles, is not ſo grievous as in former years ; but it coſts nearly as much ; gold and ſilver, fine horſes, and ſplendid accoutrements being the true repreſentation of the troops of the Perſian kings. Send the Fables of La Fontaine as ſoon as poſſible : they are divine. At firſt we think we prefer ſome to others ; but on reading them again, we find them all equally good. They are related and written in a ſtyle of excellence to which we are little accuſtomed. Tell me your opinion of them, and which ſtruck you firſt.

Our friend Corbinelli is hoping to ſettle his couſin's buſineſs happily. If you are at Chaſeu, give my compliments to M. and Madame de Toulongeon. I like this little woman : do you not think her ſtill pretty ?

LETTER *CXXXI

To the Same

Paris, August 25, 1679.

Pity me, my dear cousin, in the loss I have sustained in Cardinal de Retz. You know how deserving he was of the love and esteem of all who were acquainted with him. I was his friend for thirty years, and I never received but the tenderest proofs of his friendship. It was equally honourable and delightful to me. He was more easy of access than any man in the world. A week's fever has deprived me of this illustrious friend. I am grieved to the heart.

I have heard that a thunderbolt has fallen in your neighbourhood.[1] Inform me by what miracle you have escaped. Think as you go along of the ill fortune of Corbinelli. Cardinal de Retz loved him dearly: he had begun to allow him an annuity of two thousand francs: his unlucky planet has, I think, killed this great man.

Our good Abbé de Coulanges has been near death. The English physician's remedy has restored him. God did not see fit for Cardinal de Retz to make use of it, though he requested it incessantly. The hour of his death was appointed, and was not to be altered.

My daughter sends her compliments to you both. I am afraid she is on the wing. Adieu, my two dears.

[1] Bussy related the event thus: "It is nearly a fortnight ago that a thunderbolt fell at the distance of half a league from hence. Out of six persons who were under a walnut-tree, three were killed, and the other three injured in a way to make one of them fit for the keeper of a seraglio, and to burn his wife in the same manner. These are singular effects produced by thunder. I, who merit other punishments than the fire of heaven, have no fear of it."

LETTER CXXXII

Madame de Sévigné to the Countess de Grignan

Paris, Friday evening, September 15, 1679.

I am very uneasy at not hearing from you as I expected. I find a thousand objects in my way, which both surprise and affect me. Yesterday I was at Mademoiselle de Méri's, and to tell you the truth I am but just come from thence. She has no fever, but is so exhausted with her usual complaints and her vapours, and so overwhelmed and mortified at your departure that it grieves me to see her : no one dares talk to her of anything ; everything is a burden to her, and throws her into great agitation. She desired I would inform you of her situation and lowness of spirits. Good heavens, how I long to hear of you after the fatigues of the boat ! For the boat is always uppermost with me : in the boat I always think I see you, and scarcely ever at your inn. I suppose after this slow and gentle motion you will wish for rough roads and jolting, as you wished for a dunghill after the orange-flowers. In short, my child, I long to hear of you, as well as of the rest of your party, whom I embrace heartily and cordially. It seems to me as if the care and attention of all were fixed on you alone : and, besides being a personage of rank, you are so delicate that it would be almost a crime to think of anything else. I have seen the Marchioness d'Huxelles, who will take care to receive you at Chalons with proper distinction ; I address this letter to you there.

And now we have once more resumed our correspondence ; I can, however, assert that I fully estimated the happiness I enjoyed in your society ; and that of all the time I spent with you, there is not so much as a single moment of which I repent ; for did I not make the most of it ? At length this precious time is fled : my life passes too quickly ; I was scarce sensible of it ; and though I complained of it daily, it flew with the same rapidity. To your absence I owe the pleasure of feeling the

real duration and length of my life. We have no news: "He who sees little, has little to communicate." The King of England is very ill. The Queen of Spain does nothing but weep; so much for the calendar of this present month. I could wish to chat with you some time longer; but it grows late, and I must let you rest, so I wish you a good night. Is it possible that I should yet be ignorant of what may have happened to the boat, which to my great regret I saw gradually disappearing from my view? This suspense is almost equally painful. But if you have not written before, I have at least the consolation of knowing that it is not your fault, and that I shall be made happy by the receipt of your letter to-morrow. This is the point on which everything now depends with me, instead of being with you every day and every night.

LETTER CXXXIII

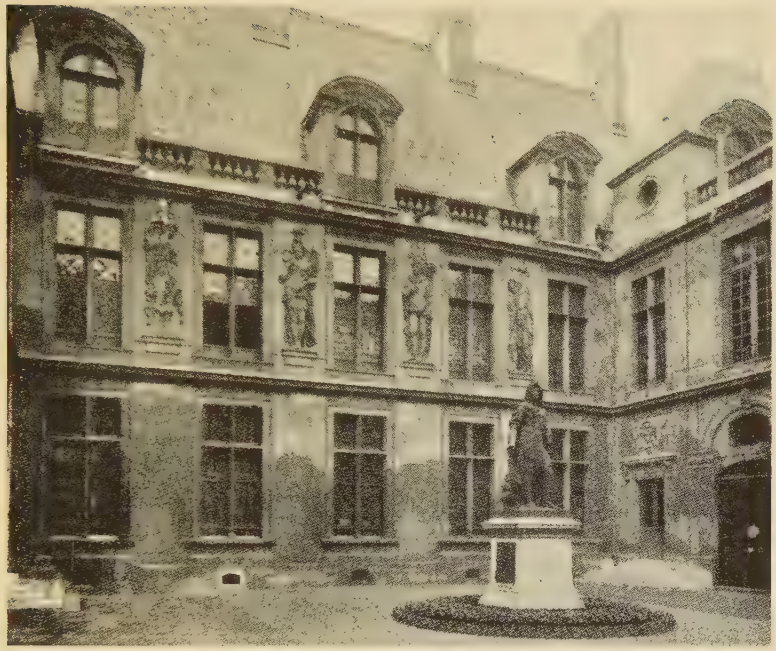
To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, September 27, 1679.

I am come here for a day or two with the good Abbé, to settle a thousand trifling affairs. Alas, my child, what a dreadful thing is the remembrance of your departure! I cannot yet endure the reflection. I am told I ought to banish it from my mind, but in vain; it will always return. It is now a fortnight since I saw and embraced you; how shall I summon up courage to pass a month, two months, three months, without my dear child? It seems a kind of eternity to me. But let us talk of the fatigues of your journey. Why did they take the Burgundy road, which is so terrible a one? For expedition's sake, no doubt; I can easily guess the reason. At length you are at Grignan. I received all your dear letters from Chagni, Chalons, the boat, Lyons, at once. I was right in my calculation that you would be at Lyons on Friday; I did not think of M. de Gordes, but I witnessed all the compliments that passed at Chalons, the fine weather that attended

you thither ; the battle between the sun and moon, which of the two should render you the greatest service ; your apartment at Madame de Rochebonne's, but I did not know it commanded so fine a prospect. I do not exactly know whether it was on Sunday or Monday you left Lyons, but am sure you must be at Grignan yesterday, that is, on Tuesday evening, for I reckon upon the civility of the Rhône. You are now, then, my beloved child, at home ; how is your health ? How do the north-easterly winds agree with you ? You must take some time to settle your blood, which has been so terribly agitated by the journey ; and, for this reason, repose is indispensably necessary to you. For myself, all I want is one single page of your writing, though I had a thousand times rather suffer myself than endanger your health in the smallest degree. I am very uneasy about Montgobert ; the air of Grignan is by no means proper for her, and I am charmed with her for forgetting herself so far as to accompany you thither. May I not say as much of you with respect to M. de Grignan ? Your sole object in this last journey was his gratification, though he concealed for a long time the desire of his heart, under the mask of politeness. You pierced through the disguise, and to this have sacrificed your health, your repose, your life, the affection and happiness of your mother, and, in short, have perfectly fulfilled the precept of the Gospel, which requires us to abandon all and cleave to one's husband. Yours deserves it ; but this very circumstance ought to make him more than commonly careful of the health which you expose so freely and courageously for his sake. For my part, it is my whole study, though, to my great mortification, my study is to no purpose.

I have your brother's letters, which mention nothing but his *dove*. His quality as a newcomer in the province makes him of consequence, so that he is engaged in all the common affairs. M. de Coulanges has had a violent fever, but is in a manner recovered : his wife and La Bagnols are at Livri : I played them a shabby trick in leaving them on Monday ; I return to-morrow morning, and they set out for Charenton on account of M. de Bagnol's affairs at Paris, which makes him more



MUSÉE CARNAVALET

(formerly the Hôtel de Sévigné)

desirous of going thither than to Livri. So you see, my dear child, I should be quite alone, if it were not for your image in my heart ; but this is enough for me, and is a faithful companion whom I never abandon, and whom I prefer to all other guests. I saw Madame de Lavardin at Madame de la Fayette's, but learned no news of her. They both send you a thousand remembrances. Madame d'Osnabruck has been to visit Madame, who received her very courteously. The Queen of Spain is on her journey, and constantly in tears. The people exclaimed, as she passed through the Rue St. Honoré, " Monsieur is too good, he will not suffer her to go in such distress." The King said to her, in the presence of the Grand Duchess,[1] " Madam, I wish this adieu may be eternal ; it would be the greatest misfortune that could happen to you if you were ever to set foot again in France." The Duchess de Rohan is delivered of a boy ; this is the third Duke in the family of Chabot. They say Marshal d'Humières will return soon ; the war is absolutely at an end. The Chevalier, I believe, will come with him.

LETTER CXXXIV

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, October 18, 1679.

I am come here on several trifling affairs ; the good Abbé is here too, and is well. One of these was to see the Chevalier de Grignan ; the sight of him affected me sensibly : I know the interest he takes in your health. We had a long conversation upon the subject, and he is a proper judge of what I feel on your account. I expected to take leave of M. de la Garde, but he does not go so soon ; he is always employed in matters that give me cause to admire the goodness of his heart. We are at the Hôtel de Carnavalet, and I think we could not do

[1] It must be remembered that the Grand Duchess had very foolishly quitted Tuscany.

better than stop here. The *worthy* entered immediately into your plans in regard to the fitting up of your apartment. There came in, very opportunely, a gentleman we have business with in the absence of M. d'Agaurri : he was so much convinced of the conveniency of this little alteration that he wishes to be the architect himself ; he understands the subject perfectly : he only begs to be allowed time to write to M. d'Agaurri, who is in Dauphiné, to obtain his consent to attack the old chimney-piece ; he has no doubt of obtaining it ; as soon as this is effected it will be done with all possible expedition, and will be a great improvement. The only misfortune is that it will cost you more than you supposed. I must, however, allow that this Hôtel de Carnavalet is a dismal place without you. My only support must be the hope of seeing you in it, not like a bird of passage, or a courier, but like an inhabitant who has no interest in a more distant dreary country, and who resolves to breathe an air that agrees better both with her business and her health.

I am vexed to find Paulina is driven from the house, as, indeed, I fancy you yourself are by this time : for you will hardly suffer your convocation to be put off in order to give the Governor time to change his mind. There is no appearance that he will do so this year. It is said that His Majesty will soon begin the negotiations about the marriage with Bavaria, by the President Colbert, who it is said is to set out shortly ; but this is at present building castles in the air.

I think I mentioned to you the quarrel between the Duke de Ventadour and the Duke d'Aumont ; the latter was returning from Bourbon with his wife, and the Duchess de Ventadour, and the Chevalier de Tilladet. The Duke de Ventadour was at an estate he has in the same county, called La Motte. He had desired his wife to come to him there, and sent at the same time to invite the whole company, but was refused ; he then came himself, but was ill received, because, following the company about from dinner time till bed time, his conversation was mixed continually with menaces and reproaches ; in short, he was like Don Quixote, pistol in hand, threatening and challenging the gentlemen. The

Chevalier treated him as a person fit only for Bedlam. At length the ladies arrived in great fear at Paris, where the King, being informed of what had happened, sent a guard to take care of Madame de Ventadour, so that she is now under the protection of His Majesty. What think you the monster did? He went to the King, attended by his neighbours, that is the Princes de Condé, de Conti, Messieurs de Luxembourg, Duras, Schomberg, Bellefond, and with incredible assurance told the King that the Chevalier de Tilladet had not paid him the *respect due to his rank*; mark the expression: he places the dukedom where it was formerly.[1] "Sire," said he, "I want to know why I am refused the company of my wife! What has happened to my person of late? Am I uglier, or more ill made, then formerly, when I was as much courted as I am now avoided? If I am ugly, sire, is it my fault? Had I been my own maker, I would have been like your Majesty; but these are things that are not in our disposal." In short, partly owing to this natural and proper, and at the same time unexpected, flattery, and partly to the justice of his argument, the King was pleased with him, as well as the whole Court. However, they are to be separated; the difficulty is that he insists that his wife shall be shut up in a convent, which is a sad affair.[2] M. de la Rochefoucauld is employed to accommodate this business, and settle matters between the gentlemen. I told you how much this disagreeable affair occupies him.

My son is solitary at the Rocks, and has managed matters so well at the assembly of the States that I really believe in less than two years he will have the honour of that splendid deputation. He swears upon his honour he loves you very dearly; I will preserve the love that exists between you,

[1] All this is related in the *Menagiana*, Vol. II, but to disguise the actors, the scene is laid in the Court of Philip II, King of Spain. It is also curious to see the different manner in which the story is told.

[2] This was really carried into effect. The Duke de Ventadour is here painted to the life, except that it may be added that he was dissipated to excess, as appears by a witticism of Madame de Cornuel's in a Letter of the 11th of September, 1676. But it must be also stated that his wife retaliated most scandalously with the Chevalier de Tilladet, whom the *Amours des Gaules* represent as one of the greatest scoundrels of the age. He was related to Louvois.

or perish in the attempt. I have paid your compliments to all the ladies you mention ; your remembrance is both a subject of joy and sorrow. Madame de la Fayette wishes to distinguish herself in this new bond of friendship ; it will not be her fault if you are not satisfied.

I embrace M. de Grignan, his daughters, and his *sober* little son ; it is really amusing to think of his aspiring to this title ; it is by no means the character of our Bretons. As for you, my dearest child, I am yours, in the perfection M. de Grignan so much admires. I want you to tell me more of yourself ; and I regret nothing so much as when I am not entertained with this agreeable subject. My apprehension lest so much writing should do you harm damps all the pleasure I receive from the perusal of your long letters.

LETTER CXXXV

To the Same

Livri, Wednesday, being All Saints Day, 1679.

You must by this time have received the letter I wrote you from Pomponne, enclosed in the same packet with Madame de Vins's ; but your storms have put everything in confusion. How much you are in extremes in Provence ! Your heats, your dews, your north-easterly winds, your unseasonable rains, your autumnal thunders, all are violent ; you know not what soft or temperate means. Your rivers overflow their banks, your fields are inundated : your Durance is always as if the devil were in him ; your Isle de Brouteron is often under water. In short, my child, when I think of the delicacy of your constitution, which has to contend with things of so violent a nature, I tremble in every limb : and pray, is not M. de Grignan, who loves you, as much terrified as I am ? For my part, it is impossible I can get rid of my fears, while I see you refusing the assistance of the surest remedies.

I saw little Madame de Némond the other day : she has been extremely ill and her lungs were affected, but she is recovering rapidly by taking asses' milk morning and evening. She had a cough and hoarseness that took away her voice. I do not ask you to take asses' milk, as it does not agree with you, and you have such a disgust to it ; I only lament, as a singular misfortune, that you are deprived of so sure and so salutary a remedy. I am always regretting the time when I had nothing to complain of but your absence ; what a dreadful circumstance it is, to be under such apprehensions as I am, and with so much reason ! I have paid all the attention to Mademoiselle de Méri that was compatible with my solitude at Livri, which I wished to enjoy as much as I could. She is no longer in danger, as she told me the other day, and her health is not so bad. M. and Madame de Mereuil, Madame de Saint-Pouanges, with my good neighbours Mesdames de Coulanges, Bagnols, and Sanzei, are all occupied with her. The Chevalier is also very attentive to her ; I shall not be behindhand in my duty as soon as I return to Paris. Were we not so nearly related as we are, and did not the season and religion prompt me to assist her, it would be a sufficient motive with me to know that any attention to her would give you pleasure ; nay, it would induce me to do a thousand times more. You may, therefore, be perfectly easy on that subject, as well as in regard to her situation, which is by no means so deplorable as it was. I shall speak with Du Chêne relative to your little physician, whom we employ in killing a few patients in our quarter, that we may have an opportunity of seeing how he succeeds ; it would be a thousand pities that he should be deprived of the privilege of killing with impunity.[1] Not that the season is favourable. This Englishman's medicine, which will soon be made public, renders all your physicians, with their purgings and bleedings, perfectly useless.

My son is in mournful solitude at the Rocks ; he tells me that the first evening he happened to be alone in my apartment, with the keys of my cabinets, which had been given him, he was assailed by a dismal thought, and so much like an event

[1] See Argan in Moliere's *Malade Imaginaire.*

that will happen some day or other that he could not help weeping, just like the good Abbé on receiving the sacrament. He gives me the strongest assurances he will never marry the person I mentioned to you ; all the world, however, tells me that a great deal of nonsense passes between them ; he must needs go to Tonquedec's, which is but two leagues from his flame : it is the talk of the whole province, and everybody exclaims at the weakness of his conduct in the affair. He assures me he has no desire to play the fool ; but as I know he is weak, and is every day acquainting me with his variations, that he is of two or three different minds in an instant, I tell him the safest way is not to visit her at all ; that it is a dangerous thing to tempt Providence ; that one misfortune is often enough to ruin us ; and that when he is duped he will curse the day in which he engaged in so silly an affair : that there will then be no remedy, and that let what will happen I shall have nothing to answer for, since I have already, as well as all my friends, told him all that can possibly be said on the subject. I am extremely anxious to hear what Mademoiselle de Grignan's answer will be to the proposal that is to be made you. I beg you not to prevent the little Marquis and Paulina from coming and amusing themselves with me : I shall receive them as I now embrace them, that is most affectionately. As to M. de Grignan, I ask his pardon for the ill I have said of his country ; I can see nothing there but Furies, whilst you are in it. I shall apologize to him when I hear of the fine weather you enjoy at Lambesc, and which, I must acknowledge, I have often admired as well as others. I charge him to be careful of his dear wife.

LETTER CXXXVI

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, November 22, 1679.

What I am going to tell you, my dear child, will both surprise and vex you. M. de Pomponne is out of favour ;

he had orders on Saturday evening, as he was returning from Pomponne, to resign his office. The King has directed that he should receive seven hundred thousand livres, and that his pension of twenty thousand livres a year, which he had as Minister, should be continued to him; intending by this to show he was satisfied with his fidelity. It was M. Colbert who gave him this information, assuring him at the same time that he was extremely mortified to be obliged, etc. M. de Pomponne asked him whether he might not be allowed the honour of speaking to the King, to learn from his own mouth what fault he had committed that brought this stroke upon him; he was told he could not; so he wrote to the King, expressing his extreme sorrow, and his utter ignorance of what could have contributed to his disgrace; he mentioned his numerous family, and besought him to have compassion on his eight children. Immediately after, he caused the horses to be put into his carriage, and returned to Paris, where he arrived at twelve at night. M. de Chaulnes, Caumartin, and I had been, as I wrote you, on the Friday at Pomponne, where we found him and the ladies, who received us with all the pleasure imaginable. We chatted all the evening, and played at chess: ah! what a checkmate were they preparing for him at St. Germain! He went thither the next morning, because a courier waited for him; so that M. Colbert, who thought to find him on Saturday evening, as usual, knowing he was set out for St. Germain returned instantly, and had nearly killed his horses. For ourselves, we did not leave Pomponne till after dinner, where we left the ladies. It was necessary to inform them of what had happened by letter; this was brought by one of M. de Pomponne's valets, who arrived at nine on the Sunday at Madame de Vins's apartment; the man's precipitation and his altered looks made Madame de Vins fancy he had brought the account of M. de Pomponne's death; so that on finding he was only disgraced, she breathed again; but she felt the extent of his misfortune, and when she was sufficiently recovered went to acquaint her sister with it. They set out that instant, leaving all the little boys in tears; and arrived in Paris at two in the afternoon, overwhelmed with grief.

You may figure to yourself this interview with M. de Pomponne, and what they felt on meeting each other in so different a situation from what they were in the evening before. I learned this sad intelligence from the Abbé de Grignan, and I confess to you it pierced me to the heart. I went to their house in the evening : they saw no company in public ; I went upstairs, and found them all there. M. de Pomponne embraced me without being able to utter a word ; the ladies could not restrain their tears, nor I mine. You would have wept too, my child; it was really a melancholy spectacle ; the circumstance of our quitting each other at Pomponne so differently augmented our sorrows. Poor Madame de Vins, whom I left in such spirits, could hardly be recognized ; a fever of a fortnight could scarcely have altered her more ; she mentioned you to me, and said she was persuaded you would feel for her and M. de Pomponne's affliction, which I assured her you would. We spoke of the blow she felt from this disgrace, both in regard to her affairs, her situation, and her husband's fortune. I do assure you she feels all this in its greatest horror. M. de Pomponne, it is true, was not a favourite, but his situation gave him an opportunity to obtain certain common things, which often make our fortune. There are many inferior situations sufficient to make the fortunes of individuals. It was besides pleasant to be thus in a manner settled at Court. Good God, what a change ! What retrenching, what economy, must now be made use of in this family ! Eight children, and not to have had time to obtain the smallest favour ! They are thirty thousand livres in debt ; you may suppose how little they will have left : they are going to a miserable retreat at Paris and Pomponne. It is said so many journeys, and sometimes the attendance of couriers, even that of Bavaria, who arrived on the Friday, and whom the King waited for with impatience, have contributed to draw this misfortune upon them.[1] But

[1] The memoirs and letters of contemporary writers all agree that M. de Pomponne's negligence was the cause of his disgrace. The more modern historians, even Hénault, keep to the received opinion. How could they fail to remark that Louis XIV, in a memorandum written in his own hand, and mentioned by Voltaire, has himself explained very differently the cause of this Minister's dismissal ? " All that passed through his hands lost the grandeur and strength it ought to have

you will easily comprehend in this the ways of Providence, when I tell you the President Colbert has his place ; as he is in Bavaria, his brother officiates in his absence, and wrote to congratulate, and to surprise him, on the back of the letter, as if by mistake : "To M. Colbert, Minister and Secretary of State." I paid my compliments of condolence to the unfortunate family. Reflect a little on the power of this family, as well at home as abroad, and you will easily perceive it far exceeds that of the other house where a wedding is going on.[1] My poor child, this is a long and circumstantial account ; but I think on such occasions we cannot be too particular. You are pleased we should always be talking to you, and in this instance I have perhaps complied with your desires too much. When your courier arrives, I shall have nowhere to send him ; and it is an additional mortification to me to find I shall henceforth be entirely useless to you, though it is true I was already so by means of Madame de Vins ; but that was meant in mere jest. In short, my child all is now at an end, and such is the way of the world. M. de Pomponne is better qualified than any man upon earth to support this misfortune with courage and with truly Christian resignation. Those who have acted like him in prosperity cannot fail to be pitied in their misfortunes.

I must, however, add a word or two respecting your letter ; it gave me real consolation ; you tell me the little boy is quite recovered, and that I should be satisfied with yourself if I

displayed, as being the orders of a King of France." These are his own words. Everyone knows, in reality, that it was from the Treaty of Nimeguen, a single year prior to M. de Pomponne's disgrace, the dominion and authority of Louis XIV affected all over Europe, were dated. From that period his Ministers treated the foreign ambassadors with insulting arrogance. The famous chambers of reunion were established. Strasbourg was taken possession of by violence. Advances were made into Italy. No conciliatory measures were adopted. All the States were irritated.

But besides M. de Pomponne's having the crime of leaning towards the Jansenists, Louvois and Colbert, though enemies to each other, both laboured to ruin him ; the first to place his friend, M. Courtin, in his situation, and the second his brother Colbert de Croissy. The last succeeded, to the great rage of Louvois.

[1] Madeleine-Charlotte le Tellier, daughter of M. de Louvois, married the next day, 23rd November, Francis, Duke of Rochefoucauld and Rocheguyon, grandson of M. de la Rochefoucauld.

were to see you. Ah, my child, it is indeed true. What a delightful sight would it be to me to see you really occupied with the care of your health by taking the necessary repose to recruit your wasted strength! It is a pleasure you have never yet afforded me. You find this care is by no means useless; you already discover its salutary effects, and if I torture myself here by my endeavours to inspire you with the same attention to your welfare, you plainly see I have good reason.

LETTER CXXXVII

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, December 13, 1679.

Say what you will, my dearest child, you must have seen, by the whole tenor of my letters, how naturally I fall into this subject, and how difficult it would be for me to keep silence, since I often think of it; and if I am one degree lower in the warmth of my friendship for the sister-in-law than you, I am as much higher with regard to the brother-in-law. Old dates, long acquaintance, and connexions discover to me, on the present occasion, that I am more strongly attached than I believed I was. They are still in the country; I enclose you the two notes they sent me when they returned your packets. You see their present situation: can anything exceed the tenderness or the rectitude of their sentiments? My esteem and friendship for them have become great, in proportion to their misfortunes; I am persuaded our misfortune has had its share in their disgrace. Cast your eyes around upon all our friends and you will see your reflections justified. A great deal more might be said on the subject. I think I have already convinced you that trifles had long been magnified into things of consequence. This had formed a disposition which had been continually fomented, with a view to take advantage of it on a proper occasion; and the last fault provoked beyond all patience, and gave the finishing blow to the whole: others

immediately made use of the occasion to promote their own interest, and the whole was resolved on in a moment. The fact is this : the courier, who had been expected with impatience, arrived on the Thursday evening ; M. de Pomponne gave the whole of the dispatches to be deciphered, which was an affair of twenty-four hours. He charged the courier not to appear till it was done ; but as he belonged to those who had dispatched him, he went and delivered his letters for the family ; the brother told His Majesty what had been written him from Bavaria. Immediately the impatience to know what was deciphering began to work. It was expected on Thursday evening, Friday all day, and Saturday till five in the evening. It is true, when M. de Pomponne arrived the whole was done. Even the following morning the affair was not desperate. He was at his country house, persuaded that nothing would be suspected. He there received the deciphered dispatches on the Friday evening, and he set out on the Saturday morning at ten, but arrived too late. This then is the reason, the pretext, or what you please to call it ; for it is certain that if it had not been on this account it would have been on some other, and that in the end this good fortune, which in fact held but by a hair would have been overturned. But what is really laughable in this affair is that the person who had planned it all (Louvois) has reaped no sort of advantage from it, but has been mortified at it beyond imagination. Our friend asked whether he might not be permitted to see His Majesty, and justify his conduct to his master. He was told for answer it was not convenient at that time ; that his fidelity was well known, that it was in no way attacked, and that some time hence he might possibly have that satisfaction. He wrote, expressing his surprise and mortification at having had the misfortune to offend ; mentioned his eight children unprovided for ; and here the affair rested. I could say a great deal on the subject ; but this is enough, and perhaps too much, especially at such a distance.

So you have considered a little the country of these two Burgundy counsellors, *it is my mother's country.* I have a notion that M. de Berbisi's acquaintance has rather the best of it. But M. de Condom, who loves you, and whom I honour

extremely, immediately comes into my head ; so that in good sooth I know not what to say to you ; *do as you like.* This is what I have told my son every time he came to ask my leave to visit Lower Brittany ; I tolerated what I could not prevent. He has been at Tonquedec's for a month. I know not where to write to him, he does not wish to hear from me. Would you have acted thus ? He makes M. d'Harrouïs perfectly in a rage with him, for he is waiting for him at Nantes, in order to return with him to Paris. I admire them both : one for his goodness and patience, and the other for his barbarity. I know not whether the dear or indifferent object be with him ; it will be all unravelled, I fancy, before the end of the year. Ah ! here comes a letter from him. He is now at Nantes, and after having made M. d'Harrouïs wait for him so long, has suffered him to go, without being able to follow him on account of some business he has at Buron. I have doubts about this conduct. He talks a great deal of his dear pigeon, and says he loves her more than all his mistresses. I shall not take upon me to say whether you ought to be satisfied with this : be satisfied at least with Madame de la Fayette, who has just been mentioning you in the most affectionate terms. We shall soon know who have been named by the Dauphiness ; they will be declared on the arrival of the courier who is expected. There are persons who say that Madame de Maintenon will be placed in a situation that will surprise the whole world ; this will not be on *Quanto's* account, for it is the most inveterate hatred that has happened in our days ; she really stands in need of no one but her own good sense.

You make me pity you in asking oranges from our quarter of the globe. It is a strange alteration to see them frozen in Provence. The sun, however, is not so : you mention the mildness of May, which gives me some consolation. I have seen Mademoiselle de Méri ; she made an effort to come to see this pretty apartment : she does not like it ; what a pity ! She still continues in a very languishing state ; her uneasiness about her little household affairs is really without end ; I could never have supposed that such a trifle would have occupied her mind so entirely. M. and Madame de Mêmes are going



FRANÇOISE D'AUBIGNÉ

puis Madame Scarron ; puis Marquise de Maintenon

from hence ; they have begun to talk of you and Grignan afresh, with great prepossessions of your charming house, and fine titles ; Paulina and her charms, your music, your terraces, your politeness ; and conclude with repeated and earneſt entreaties that I would assure you both of their moſt humble service, respect, friendship, and gratitude. In short I never saw persons so hearty in their good wishes to you. I undertook to perform all this, and I have acquitted myself of the office. I have this moment been told that M. de Richelieu is to be Knight of Honour, his wife Lady of Honour to the Dauphiness ; Madame de Créqui, Lady of Honour to the Queen. I think this is very likely to be true. The ſtatement will, in that case, be confirmed in a few days.

I wish I could describe to you a screen which Cardinal d'Eſtrées has presented to Madame de Savoy,[1] in the manner of a *sapate*,[2] and of which Madame de la Fayette has had the whole management, it being entirely of her invention. You muſt know, Madame de Savoy wishes for nothing so much as the accomplishment of her son's marriage with the Infanta of Portugal ; this is the gospel of the day. This screen is of the middle size ; on one side, which is a painting, is a very ſtriking likeness of the Princess in miniature, about the size of the hand, accompanied by the Virtues, diſtinguished by their proper characters ; this makes a beautiful and taſteful group. Opposite the Princess is a ſtriking likeness of the young Prince, handsome as an angel, surrounded by the Loves and Infantine Sports : this is another very pleasing little group. The Princess, with her right hand, shows her son the sea, and the city of Lisbon. Glory and Fame hover over his head, ready to crown him. Under the Prince's feet are these words from Virgil :

Matre deâ monotrante viam.[3]

[1] Marie-Jeanne Baptiſte de Savoy Nemours, mother to Victor-Amadeus Francis, Duke of Savoy, afterwards King of Sicily, in 1713, and King of Sardinia in 1720.

[2] This is the name of a sort of feſtival invented by the Spaniards, who celebrated it yearly on the 5th of December. It was afterwards introduced into Savoy, by Catherine of Spain, wife of Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, and has been kept up there ever since. This usage consiſts in making presents, but so as to conceal from whom they come.

[3] The goddess mother showing the way.

Nothing was ever better imagined. The other side of the screen is beautifully embroidered with gold and silver. The stand is richly gilt and finely wrought. The nails which fasten the lace are diamonds, as is the pivot which supports it. On the top of the stand is the crown of Savoy, consisting entirely of diamonds. In short, this present is so superb, and the subject so pleasing, as to eclipse all the *sapates* that ever were seen. This pretty screen is to be discovered standing before the fire, that the Princess, seeing it immediately on coming out of her closet, may have all the pleasure of a surprise. Ah! my child, this is the sort of present I should like to make. I know not whether my description has done it justice.

LETTER CXXXVIII

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, December 27, 1679.

The whole family of the Pomponnes are come here to pass the holidays. Madame de Vins was the first that came; I had seen her twice. I saw M. de Pomponne, I mean he who lives at Fresne; or, if you will, the worthiest man in the world, and nothing more, as being Minister made no change in him, I can assure you his fall has made no more change than that did. He is an excellent companion; he mentioned you to me with great kindness, and appeared much concerned at your last letter. This affair is not so soon discussed. I, on my side, told him in what terms you had written to me on the subject of his misfortune. Madame de Vins melted into tears when she spoke of the goodness of your heart. There was not a dry eye among us. They returned to Pomponne next day, having as yet come to no settled resolution: they have not yet received their dismissal, and of course have had no money. He has asked whether he might not be permitted to see the King; but has had no answer. I cannot see how he can be better

than at Pomponne, inspiring his children with true and solid virtue, and conversing with the solitary beings who are there. Madame de Vins has done nothing but pay visits the whole day ; she wants both you and Madame de Villars. She reckons me somebody, and I am happy in being at leisure to do her these trifling favours. We have been to see the Mesdames de Richelieu, de Chaulnes, de Créqui, de Rochefort ; and afterwards M. de Pomponne, who appears every day more and more amiable, and is possessed of the soundeſt underſtanding of any man I have ever met with. Madame de Vins is going to take an excursion to Saint Germain. What grief, to behold that country, once her own, but where she is now an utter ſtranger ! How I dread this journey for her ! She will afterwards return to the afflicted family, whose sole joy and consolation she is.

The Court is overjoyed at the marriage of the Prince de Conti with Mademoiselle de Blois.[1] They are true romantic lovers : the King was highly amused at the ardour of their passion ; he spoke to his daughter very affectionately, and assured her he loved her so much that he could not think of parting with her ; the little creature was so moved and overjoyed at it, that she wept. The King told her he saw it was from aversion to the husband he had chosen for her that she wept ; she burſt into tears a second time, her little heart was unable to contain her joy. The King related this little scene, and everybody was charmed with it. As for the Prince de Conti, he was transported with the thoughts of it, he knew neither what he did, nor what he said ; he ran againſt all he met in his way, as he was going to visit Mademoiselle de Blois. Madame Colbert wished to prevent him from seeing her till the evening ; he burſt open the doors, threw himself at her feet, and kissed her hand : she very unceremoniously embraced him, and then another burſt of tears. This dear little Princess is so affectionate and so pretty that we almoſt want to eat her. The Count de Grammont, amongſt others, paid his compliments to the Prince de Conti : " Sir," said he, " I am heartily glad of your marriage : take my advice, keep well with your father-in-law, do not disoblige him, do not fall out with him

[1] Daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de la Vallière.

on any trifling occasion ; keep well with the family, and I can answer for it you will have no reason to repent the alliance." The King was diverted at this ; and in marrying his daughter, compliments the Prince, the Duke and Duchess, like any other person. He has solicited the friendship of the last for Mademoiselle de Blois, adding that she will be too happy in being often in her company and in having an opportunity of copying so excellent an example. He delights in teasing the Prince de Conti, who is given to understand the marriage articles are not without difficulties, and that the marriage must be put off till the next winter. On hearing this the amorous Prince swoons away ; the Princess at the same time vowing she will have no other husband. The catastrophe is somewhat allied to Don Quixote, and in reality there never was a finer piece of romance in the world. You may guess what pleasure this match, as well as the manner in which it has been concluded, creates in a certain place.[1]

The portrait of the Dauphiness is arrived ; she appears to be but moderately handsome ; they praise her understanding, her teeth, her stature, but these perfections gave de Troy[2] no opportunity of displaying his talents. I have thanked M. de la Rochefoucauld in your name. He has a very flattering regard both for you and your husband. Madame de la Fayette sends her kindest compliments to you ; so do the Cardinals de Bouillon and d'Estrées, and the widows ; I see on all sides nothing else but persons requesting me to remember them to you.

Madame d'Effiat has neither spoiled anything, nor is she spoiled herself. Marshal Clerambault's lady is here ; she supports disgrace like a true Stoic, and has no thoughts of opening a vein on the occasion[3] ; but she lost a thousand louis-d'ors to the little d'Harrouïs the evening she arrived ; this is sufficient to throw a light upon what happened to her at the Palais Royal.

[1] Madame de Montespan beheld, no doubt, with grief the King's affection for a daughter of Madame de la Vallière.

[2] An eminent portrait painter.

[3] Allusion to the death of Seneca.

LETTER CXXXIX

To the Same

Paris, Friday, January 5, 1680.

Ah, my beloved, how much I am obliged to Madame du Janet for taking the pen out of your hands! If by means of the bad air of Salon, and your eternal fatigue, you are relapsing every moment, how much reason have I to conjure you a thousand times to lay aside all thoughts of writing! You talk of your disease with a skill that astonishes me; but the interest I take in your welfare enables me to understand all you tell me! How much I wish that cursed easterly wind, and that wicked south would suffer you to rest! What a misfortune it is to be exposed to the blast of the two winds that so often prevail, and especially in Provence! I ask you, my child, whether I ought not to be exceedingly uneasy at your present situation.

I was yesterday at the grand Carmelites with Mademoiselle, who luckily bid Madame de Lesdiguières to bring me along with her. We accordingly entered that sacred abode. I was charmed with the good sense of Mother Agnes; she mentioned you, as knowing you through her sister.[1] I saw Madame Stuart, who is both happy and contented. I saw also Mademoiselle d'Epernon, who thought me but little altered; we had not seen each other for upwards of thirty years; she seemed to me horribly changed. Little du Janet never left me; she took the white veil three days ago; she is a miracle of fervour and devotion. I shall relate this to her mother. But what an angel[2] appeared at last! whom the Prince de Conti had detained in the parlour. She has, in my eyes, all the charms we formerly witnessed. I found her neither overgrown nor yellow; she is not quite so thin as formerly, but much happier; the same eyes, the same looks; neither austerities, bad diet, nor want of sleep, have been able to hollow or dim them; the

[1] The Marchioness de Villars.
[2] Madame de Vallière.

habit, strange as it is, has had no effect on the gracefulness and elegance of her person : her modesty is no more than she possessed when she was delivered of the Princess de Conti ; but it is sufficient for a Carmelite. She said a thousand polite things to me, and then mentioned you so justly and so opportunely. Everything she uttered was so becoming her character, that it is impossible for anything to exceed it. The Prince de Conti loves and respects her greatly ; she is his director : he is devout, and will, like his father, continue so. In reality, the habit and retirement of this place add wonderful dignity to her.

You have seen the effect of my prophecy. Certainly, the qualified person (Madame de Montespan) cannot, in any degree, come in competition with the unqualified (Madame de Maintenon) ; for she considers her as the confidential friend. The lady who is above all (the Queen) does the same ; so that she is the very soul of the Court. I take pleasure in giving you this intelligence a few days beforehand, as I received it. The person that is not to be seen,[1] and whom no one mentions, is as well as heart could wish ; she sometimes shows herself like a divinity, but holds no earthly correspondence. She has given magnificent New Year's gifts to her predecessor and all her children, to make up for past neglects, when louis-d'ors were scarce.

Madame de Soubise is still at Paris, where she refuses to see anyone ; it is supposed she will remain there longer than she imagines ; she has said several things which have given offence. Monsieur has desired Beauvais to quit the Palais Royal ; he found her in Madame's apartment, in conversation with the Count de Soissons.[2] She is at Madame de Vibraye's.

[1] Mademoiselle de Fontanges.

[2] Louis Thomas de Savoy, Count de Soissons, married in December, 1682, Urania de la Cropte-de-Beauvais.

Madame says, in her letters : "The King fell in love with Mademoiselle de Beauvais ; but she remained firm : he then turned his thoughts to her companion, La Fontanges." She was daughter of the Madame de Beauvais, first lady of the bedchamber to Queen Anne of Austria, who, though blind of one eye, without youth or beauty, first gave the young Louis XIV a taste for pleasures, which afterwards occupied so large a space in his life.

This is the surest way of marrying Beauvais to that Prince, who would make it a point of honour not to abandon her, as what she suffers is on his account. It is said that Madame de Vibraye will be appointed a lady of honour to the Princess of Conti, with all the privileges of a lady of the palace.

I have this morning received a very long letter from Madame de Villars ; I would have sent it to you if it contained anything more than three points you are already acquainted with ; that is, the esteem, admiration, and affection, you know she entertains for you ; much affliction and astonishment at M. de Pomponne's misfortune, which you are beginning to get the better of ; the news from Spain, and the praises of Madame de Grancey, which you know likewise. It appears, besides, that she confines herself a good deal at home, as she wants to shun all appearance of uneasiness, and to give the lie to the prophecies. The Queen is to see her *incog.*, but she obliges them to use great entreaty first, to give her merit a new lustre. The young Queen is perfectly adored ; she made her appearance for the last time at the Queen-mother's dressed in the French fashion. She teaches the King French, and the King teaches her Spanish : all goes well hitherto.

Madame de Coulanges is at St. Germain, where she is very busy about the New Year's gifts ; and it happens that poor La Trousse has the whole fatigue of it. He is always busy; and she harsh, contemptuous, and satirical : it is impossible to form an idea of their method of going on. The Marchioness (de la Trousse) is constantly in a rage, and her daughter in despair. I keep up every acquaintance you desire I should. Madame de Lesdiguières has given me a thousand compliments for you and very genteelly (*sic*). I shall give yours to Madame de Rochefort ; and as for her companion,[1] Madame de Coulanges will take the office upon herself. Madame de Vins is still here ; the other ladies are at Pomponne : their house at Paris had like to have been burnt to the ground ; one room, with its furniture, was entirely consumed : but the miracle is that there was some powder in it which did not take fire, and which, in all probability, would have blown the house up. This would have completed

[1] Madame de Maintenon.

their ruin, but God has preserved them. Adieu, my dear, lovely child. My son, who is still at Nantes, would like to put off his return till the Dauphiness is with child. I laughed at his idea, and have written to him, either to come away, or to sell his office.

LETTER CXL

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, January 10, 1680.

If I had a heart of crystal, in which you could view the grief that overwhelms me at your wishing I may outlive you, you would then also clearly perceive with how much sincerity I pray that Providence will not invert the ordinary course of nature, who has called me into the world before you, that I might be your mother; reason, and the established order of things, require me to depart the first; and God knows with what earnestness I pray that this order may be preserved in my case. I cannot believe but the justice of this sentiment must affect you, as much as it affects me; after this reflection, my child, you will have no difficulty in conceiving the interest I take in your preservation. I conjure you, by all the regard you entertain for me, never to write me more than a sheet at most; bid somebody else write to me, and even give up dictating as even that fatigues. I cannot find the least pleasure in what gave me the highest gratification heretofore, when you were absent; and the length of your letters really does me more harm than they do you. I entreat you to deliver me from this pang; I shall still have but too many left. Madame de Schomberg advises, if you must at all events drink coffee, to sweeten it with Narbonne honey instead of sugar: this is good for the lungs; it is only allowed to M. de Schomberg when qualified in this way. He has been extremely ill for six or seven months past. I am perfectly well. I told you what an excellent effect the purgative medicine had on me, and the cherry water, too.

My hands I consider as cured, and I never trouble myself about them. Ah, my dear child, think of nothing but your health ! neglect nothing you think capable of affording you relief ; you are too well acquainted with the nature of affection to doubt of what I suffer when I think of your situation : a thought which never quits me.

I am entirely of your opinion in respect to the household of the Dauphiness. Marshal d'Humières has written to Rouville, that he is the servant of the devotees, ever since he saw that Marshal de Bellefond was made equerry, Madame d'Effiat governess, and Madame de Vibraye lady of honour. They say this last has been rejected as having made a great pother and a multitude of requests. It is pretended that any place, be it what it may, *in the Lord's house*, is an honour to the person appointed to it. Formerly the Queen's ladies of honour were marchionesses, and all the great offices in the King's household were filled with Lords only ; now, all the world is a Duke and a Marshal of France ; everything is risen.

M. de Pomponne is come here to settle his affairs, and is going to receive his money. I see Madame de Vins frequently, who, as she has nothing particular to say, does not write to you, to avoid giving you the trouble of writing unnecessarily. M. de Bussy and his daughter [1] have dined here twice ; they have really an infinite deal of wit ; they entreat me to make their compliments to you. Little Coulanges is here, just the same as ever : Madame de Rochefort takes her with her to meet the Dauphiness. I advised her to take that journey, as she had no better employment on her hands ; and perhaps it may do her good to write some entertaining account of it. Adieu, my best beloved. I know nothing. I am of opinion, too, that by shortening my letters I may occasion you fewer reflections, and possibly diminish your ardour to write. This is what I sincerely desire, as I can form no wish but what has your good for its object.

My son has returned into Brittany, to spend Twelfth-tide ; he assures me he will be here the 20th ; God grant he may. Madame de Soubise is still invisible ; she will be at Paris

[1] Louise-Frances de Rabutin, Marchioness de Coligny.

longer than she imagines ; she has been extremely well served in this country. Mademoiselle de Fontanges is a *singular* beauty [1] ; she appears in the gallery like some goddess ; and Madame de Montespan, on the other side, like another goddess. This singular beauty has given New Year's gifts to the amount of six thousand pistoles.[2] Madame de Coulanges has been greatly admired for the part she has had the management of.

LETTER CXLI

To the Same

Paris, Friday, January 26, 1680.

I begin with the state of your health, as the subject nearest my heart. It is without disparagement to this favourite idea, that I see and hear what passes in the world : events are more or less interesting to me, as they are more or less connected with you : even the attention I pay to news, springs from the same source. I find you well nursed, my dear child, and kept in cotton ; you are not in the whirlwind, so that I am perfectly easy with regard to your quiet ; but then I am by no means so with respect to that heaviness and those heats you are troubled with ; and then, again, the pain you endure, with no north-easterly winds, or extraordinary fatigue to occasion it. I could wish to have a little further information on this particular, which is of so much importance to me : the care that is taken

[1] This is how Madame describes her in her letters : " La Fontanges, though a little freckled, was beautiful from head to foot ; nothing more wonderful was ever seen. She had also the best character possible, but no more sense than a kitten." The Abbé de Choisy says, " She was as handsome as an angel, and as stupid as a post."

[2] The following is a trait of the magnificent gallantry of the times, as related in a letter of Madame de Scudéry to Bussy.

" Mademoiselle de . . . has received a very gallant New Year's gift. She found upon her toilet a little devil holding a German mouse, which, as soon as she touched it, opened of itself, and let fall two bracelets of the value of a thousand louis each, with a slip of paper, on which was the inscription : *The devil is in it.*"

of you cannot be wholly owing to precaution, nor without good reason. I wish you may be sincere in your resolution, no longer to deſtroy yourself with your writing desk: confirm me, I beseech you, in my good opinion of you, and never again write me such long letters, since Montgobert acquits herself so well of the office; and, as I have already told you, she may also save you the trouble of dictating. I could wish, too, she would now and then add a word or two of her own, relative to the ſtate of your health.

I have at laſt received a letter from my son, who is at Nantes. He was but twenty days on the road; he travelled only ninety leagues from Brittany in the month of January, to spend the holidays, and without one spark of love in his heart! I have written to him to take care how he tells this ſtory to others, and that to save his reputation he ought to allege some flame, real or pretended; otherwise he would appear more a Breton than the Bretons themselves. I have also entreated him not to ſtay at Nantes, on account of my affairs; they are not a plausible excuse, and I should be sorry to pass for so silly or so covetous a being as to prefer things which are of no consequence, to the necessity of paying his attendance at Court on such an occasion as the present. He seems to me to be under some embarrassment; but he will return soon enough to set out with M. de Chaulnes; mark my goodness, I have secured him a place in his carriage.

In reality, I had forgotten little de Genor; I leave the care of such antediluvians to such folks as you and your worthy brother. Had it not been for the presence of Mademoiselle I should have renounced Mademoiselle d'Epernoon. I said that day, as, indeed, I do every day of my life, the foolish things you are pleased to call pretty, which is saying as much as one well can to qualify them; you wish what I said the other day to Madame de Richelieu, to be distinguished from this class, to which I readily consent, as it bears so great a resemblance of what M. de Grignan would have said; and I thought so at the time. Such things come from him naturally, whenever he speaks or writes; and it is owing to this that his letters are for months the ornament of every pocket. Madame de Coulanges

had hers still yesterday, and the watch ; is not this droll ? But, my dear, think not so much of what you are, or ought to be, as to forget that it is your duty to be here sometimes. It is not only your native country, but M. de Grignan's likewise ; and I should pass my time heavily indeed, did not I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you both here this year. M. de Rennes [1] reserves your apartment for you, though he will allow us plenty of time to repair it. You have no obligation to me for his society, it is not one : he is an admirable inmate ; he is as light as a feather, and so are all his attendants. He talks little, and is seldom to be seen ; he is continually trotting up and down, and has no aversion to being alone in his study. His company is much sought after, and he has not the least resemblance to the late M. de Mans.[2] In short, his value is so great that, if I could wish for anyone who was not yourself, it must be just such a one as he is. He has often begged me to present his compliments to you, and to tell you that however satisfied he is with his present situation, he has too great a regard for me not to wish to be obliged to relinquish it to you.

Madame de Soubise is no longer talked of ; she even seems forgotten already. In fact there are a thousand other things to employ our attention at present ; and I am foolish enough myself to venture on some other topic. For these two days it has been, as in the affair of Mademoiselle and M. de Lauzun : a constant bustle, sending to learn the news, paying visits from house to house, to learn what is passing ; curiosity is on the stretch ; and this is what has come out, in expectation of the remainder.[3]

[1] Jean Baptiste de Beaumanoir, Bishop of Rennes, who at this time lodged in Madame de Grignan's apartments, in the Hôtel de Carnavalet.

[2] Philibert Emanuel de Beaumanoir, Bishop of Mans, died 16th July, 1671. He was first cousin to M. de Rennes.

[3] La Voisin, La Vigoureux, and a priest of the name of Le Sage, known at Paris as conjurors and casters of nativities, added to this jugglery the secret practice of poisons, which they denominated *succession powder*. They did not fail to accuse those who applied to them for one thing of having had recourse to them for another. It is thus Marshal de Luxembourg was exposed, by his intendant Bonard, for having made some extravagant exorcism with Le Sage, for the purpose of recovering his lost papers. The vindictive Louvois seized the opportunity to ruin, or at least to torment him.

Besides the persons here named, Madame de Polignac was decreed to be imprisoned, and Madame de la Ferté, as well as the Countess de Roure, to be personally summoned.

M. de Luxembourg was at Saint Germain on Wednesday ; the King frowned on him more than usual : he was told there was a warrant issued to apprehend him ; he asked to be permitted to speak to the King ; you may conjecture what was said. The King told him that if he were innocent he had nothing to do but to throw himself voluntarily into prison, and that he had appointed such upright judges to make inquiry into affairs of this kind, that he left everything to them. M. de Luxembourg immediately took coach, and went to Father de la Chaise ; Mesdames de Lavardin and de Mouri met him as they were coming here, in a very melancholy mood, in the Rue Saint Honoré ; after passing an hour at the convent of the Jesuits, he repaired to the Bastille, and delivered to Baisemeaux [1] the order he brought from Saint Germain. He was at first shown into a tolerably handsome chamber. Madame de Meckelbourg [2] came there to visit him, and was almost drowned in tears. About an hour after she left him an order came to confine him in one of those horrible places in the towers, of which the windows are closed with iron bars, so as scarcely to admit the light of day, and to suffer no one to see him. This, my child, is ample subject for reflection ; think of the brilliant fortune of such a man, raised to honour of commanding in chief the King's armies, and then figure to yourself what his feelings must be on hearing those grating bolts shut upon him, and, if it were possible for him to sleep, what his thoughts must be when he awakes ! No one thinks there has been any poison in his affair. This is a misfortune that seems to obliterate every other.

The Countess de Soissons was accused of having poisoned her husband ; Madame d'Alluie, her father-in-law ; Madame de Tingres, her children ; Madame de Polignac, a valet who was in possession of her secret ; and this secret was, that she wished to give the King a charm, to make herself beloved by him.

The King gave the Duchess de Foix a note, written by her to La Voisin, expressed in these terms : " The more I rub, the less they project." He required an explanation. It alluded to a recipe to increase the size of the bosom. She informed La Voisin that her drug was ineffectual.

It may be supposed that La Voisin had many of these secrets for the use of ladies.

[1] Governor of the Bastille.

[2] Sister of M. de Luxembourg, formerly Madame de Châtillon.

Madame de Tingres is summoned to give evidence on the trial. The Countess de Soissons could not endure the thoughts of a prison ; she has been allowed time to make her escape ; if she really is guilty. She was playing at basset on the Wednesday, when M. de Bouillon came in ; he begged her to step with him into the closet, where he told her she must either leave France or go to the Bastille. She was not long in determining what to do. She immediately called the Marchioness d'Alluie from the card-table, and they have never appeared since. When the hour of supper came, they were told the Countess supped in town ; the whole company broke up, thinking something very extraordinary had happened. In the meantime, parcels are packed up with money, jewels, etc. The male servants have grey liveries, and eight horses are put to the carriage. She made the Marchioness d'Alluie, who they say was unwilling to go, sit behind on the same side with her, and the two female servants in the front. She told her people not to be uneasy on her account, that she was innocent, but that some vile women [1] had taken pleasure in implicating her ; she wept, called on Madame de Carignan, and left Paris at three in the morning. It is said she is gone to Namur ; you may be sure nobody wants to follow her. She will, notwithstanding, be tried in her absence, if it be only to clear her reputation to the world ; there is a great deal of detraction in what La Voisin says. It is believed the Duke de Villeroi [2] is very much concerned at it ; he keeps his room and sees nobody. Perhaps I may be able to tell you more before I seal my letter.

Madame de Vibraye has fallen into the old train of devotion : God, as you well remarked, would not suffer her to pass her whole life in the company of her enemies. Madame de Buri turns her talking-mill with very great address. If the Princess is to be seen at Paris, Madame de Vins wishes me to accompany her when she goes there. Pomenars has been cut for the stone ; did I not tell you so ? I have seen him ; it is pleasant to hear him talk of the poisons. One is almost tempted to say to him :

[1] La Voisin and her associates in the witchcrafts, etc.

[2] Francis Neufville, afterwards Marshal of France. He had been the lover and was the intimate friend of the Countess de Soissons.

" Is it possible this crime alone should be unknown to you ? " Volonne gives his opinion, without any hesitation, and wonders how anyone could hold a correspondence with these *vile women.* The Queen of Spain is, in a manner, as much confined as M. de Luxembourg. Madame de Villars wrote to Madame de Coulanges the other day that were it not for her love to M. de Villars she would not have consented to pass the winter at Madrid. She gives Madame de Coulanges many pleasant and entertaining narratives, as she thinks they will go farther.[1] I am overjoyed to have the pleasure of perusing her letters, without the trouble of answering them. Madame de Vins thinks as I do. M. de Pomponne is gone to breathe the air of Pomponne, where he means to ſtay three days ; he has received all, and given up all ; ſo that affair is finiſhed. It really pains me to hear him always asking, what news ? He is as much a ſtranger to what is paſſing as one living on the banks of the Marne ; he is in the right to make his mind as happy as he can. Mine, as well as the Abbé's, was much affected at what you wrote with your own hand ; you did not feel it, my dear child, but it was impoſſible to read it without tears. Good heavens ! you pronounce yourſelf as good for nothing, as an encumbrance to the earth ; to one who ſees no object in exiſtence but you ! Think of the conſequences your talking thus may produce. I beſeech you, never henceforth to ſay any ill of your humour. Your heart and mind are too perfect to ſuffer ſuch light clouds to be perceived ; be a little more tender of truth and juſtice, as well as of the ſole object of my vows and prayers. I ſhall think myſelf really dead till I have the gratification of ſeeing you.

[1] Madame de Coulanges, paſſing her life at Court, with Madame de Maintenon, and even with Mademoiſelle de Fontanges, could eaſily report theſe agreeable narratives to the King.

LETTER CXLII

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, January 31, 1680.

It is impossible for me to see your handwriting without emotion. I well know the injury writing does you ; and though you say the most affectionate and most amiable things to me possible, I regret exceedingly the purchase of that pleasure at the expense of your lungs. I know you are still far from well. You tell me the weather is extremely mild, and that you do not fatigue yourself, and that you write less than usual. Whence, then, proceeds this obstinacy in your disorder ? You are dumb on that subject, and Montgobert has the cruelty, though she has the pen in her hand, not to say a single word about it. Good God ! what is the rest of the world to me, and what pleasure can I receive from the account of all the rejoicings at Aix, when I find you are obliged to go to bed at eight in the evening ? " But," say you, " do you then wish me to sit up late and fatigue myself ? " No, my dearest ; God forbid I should be capable of forming so wicked a wish, but when you were here, you were not wholly incapable of relishing the sweets of society. I have at length seen M. de Gordes ; he told me, with great sincerity, that you were in a very feeble state in the boat, and that you were much better at Aix ; but then, with the same simplicity, he assures me that the air of Provence is too keen, too piercing, and too drying, in your present condition. When we are in health, nothing is amiss ; but when the lungs are attacked, and we are thin and delicate, like you, we run the risk of putting it out of our power ever to recover. Tell me no more that the delicacy of your lungs draws our ages nearer together. God forbid that the order established by Providence, so agreeable to nature and reason, and at the same time so dear to me, should be reversed with respect to us.

I must resume the article of news, which I always suffer to rest awhile, when I get upon the subject of your health. M. de Luxembourg has been two days without eating ; he asked for several Jesuits, but has been refused every one of them ; he asked to have the *Lives of the Saints*, and it has been given him ; you will see he is at a loss *to which of the saints he shall devote himself.* He was interrogated for four hours on the Friday or Saturday. I cannot recollect which ; after that his mind appeared much relieved, and he ate some supper. It is thought he would have done better to have made his innocence take the field, and to have left word he would return, when his proper judges [1] should think fit to summon him. He has done a real injury to the Dukedom, in acknowledging the chamber ; but he was willing to yield a blind obedience to the commands of His Majesty. M. de Cessac has followed the example of the Countess. Mesdames de Bouillon and de Tingres were interrogated on Monday at the chamber of the arsenal. Their noble families attended them to the gate : there is yet no appearance of blackness in the follies which have been laid to their charge, nor even so much as a shade of grey. Should nothing farther be discovered, this is a scandal which might very well have been spared, especially to families of their high quality. Marshal de Villeroi [2] says, these gentlemen and ladies do not believe in God, though they believe in the devil. In reality, a great many ridiculous things are related, respecting the private transactions of these abominable women. Madame de la Ferté, who is so properly named, went out of complaisance (to La Voisin's) with the Countess (de Soissons), but did not go upstairs ; M. de Langres accompanied Madame de la Ferté ; this is very black ; the circumstance has given her a pleasure not often enjoyed by her, which is to hear it said that she is innocent.[3] The Duchess de Bouillon went to ask La Voisin for a small dose of poison to kill an old tiresome husband she had, and a nostrum to marry a young man she

[1] The Parliament of Paris.

[2] Nicholas de Neufville, Marshal Duke de Villeroi, father to the last Marshal of that name.

[3] The *Amours des Gaules* have rendered her gallantries notorious, which may be called by a term less mild.

loved. This young man was M. de Vendôme, who led her by one hand, and M. de Bouillon, her husband, by the other. When a *Mancini* [1] is guilty only of a folly like this, information is given of it ; and these witches explain it seriously and shock all Europe with a mere trifle. The Countess de Soissons asked whether she could not recover a lover who had deserted her ? This lover was a great Prince ; and it is asserted that she declared unless he returned to her she would make him repent his ingratitude. This is understood to be the King, and everything is of importance that has relation to him ; but let us look to the sequel ; if she has committed any greater crime, she has not mentioned it to these baggages. One of our friends says there is an elder branch of the poison, to which they never refer, as it is not a native of France. What we have here are younger branches only, without shoes to their feet. La T . . . gives us to understand there is something of greater consequence behind, as she was schoolmistress to the novices. She says : " I admire the world ; it never really believes I have had children by M. de Luxembourg." Alas ! God knows whether she has or not : the present prevailing opinion, however, is in favour of the innocence of the persons denounced, and a universal horror for the defamers ; to-morrow it may be the reverse. You well know the nature of these general opinions ; I shall give you a faithful account of them ; it is the only subject of conversation here : indeed, there is scarcely an example of such a scandal in any Court in Christendom. It is said La Voisin put all the infants whose abortion she had procured, into an oven ; and Madame de Coulanges, as you may suppose, when speaking of La T . . . , says *it was for her the oven was heating.*

I had a long chat yesterday with M. de la Rochefoucauld, on a subject we have already discussed. There is nothing to oblige you to write ; but he entreats you to believe, that what could give him the highest gratification in the world would be to have it in his power to contribute to your changing the place of your residence, should an opportunity offer. I never saw so obliging or so amiable a man.

[1] Madame de Bouillon, as well as the Countess de Soissons, was the niece of Cardinal Mazarin. It will be seen that she was innocent.

What I am going to tell you, I have heard from good authority. Madame de Bouillon entered the chamber like a Queen, sat down on a chair placed there on purpose for her, and, instead of answering to the first question that was asked her, demanded that what she should say might be taken down in writing ; it was, " that her sole reason for coming there was from the respect she bore to the King's command, and not in obedience to the chamber, whose authority she in no wise acknowledged, as she would not derogate from the privileges of the Dukedom." Every word was written down. When she took off her glove, she discovered a very beautiful hand. Her answers were very sincere ; those respecting her age not excepted. " Do you know La Vigoureux ? " " No." " Do you know La Voisin ? " " Yes." " What reason had you to desire the death of your husband ? " " Desire the death of my husband ! ask him whether he believes a syllable of it. He gave me his hand to the very gate." " But what was your reasons for so often visiting La Voisin ? " " Because I wanted to see those Sibyls she promised me I should see ; a company which certainly well deserved all this noise and scrutiny." " Did you not show that woman a bag of money ? " She answered, " I did not, and for more reasons than one," and then with a smiling, and at the same time a disdainful air, " Well, gentlemen, have you done with me ? " " Yes, madam." She rose, and as she was going out said loud enough to be heard, " I really could not have believed that men of sense would have asked so many foolish questions." She was received by all her friends and relations with adoration, she was so pretty, easy, natural, firm, unconcerned, and tranquil.[1]

La T . . . was by no means so cheerful. M. de Luxembourg is perfectly disconcerted ; he is neither a man nor half a man, nor even a woman, unless it be a foolish woman. " Shut this window ; light a fire ; give me some chocolate ; give me that book ; I have abandoned God, and God has abandoned me."

[1] To render this picture complete, it is necessary to cite another stroke related by Voltaire. " La Reynie, one of the Presidents of this Chamber, was so ill-advised to ask the Duchess de Bouillon if she had seen the devil. She replied that she saw him at that moment : that he was very ugly, and very dirty, and was disguised as a Counsellor of State. The questioner proceeded no farther."

This is the conduct he displayed before Baisemeaux and his commissaries, with a countenance pale as death. With nothing better than this to carry to the Bastille he had better have gained time, as the King, with infinite goodness, had put into his power to do till the very moment before he committed himself; but we must of necessity have recourse to Providence, in spite of our efforts to the contrary; it was by no means natural to behave as he has done, weak as he appears to be.[1] I was misinformed; Madame de Meckelbourg has not seen him: and La T . . . , who came with him from St. Germain, never intended any more than himself to give Madame de Meckelbourg the least notice of it, though he had time enough to have done it, if he had been so inclined; but La T . . . kept every one from seeing him, and watched him so closely that not a soul came to him except herself. I have been to see this Meckelbourg at the nunnery of the Holy Sacrament, where she has retired. She is in great affliction, and complains loudly of La T . . . , whom she blames for all her brother's misfortunes. I made your compliments to her, by way of anticipation, and assured her you would be extremely grieved to hear of her ill-fortune; she expressed great regard for you. One might, at this time, do almost what one pleased at Paris; it would not be noticed. Madame de Soubise is entirely forgotten; and as for the sufferings of poor Bertillac, I am really ignorant what has become of her. However, I cannot help thinking of my poor Adhémar, poor child! How I pity her being jealous! Do you, my child, pity her too? I am quite concerned for her.

[1] Madame de Sévigné seems to have adopted, at this moment, the ridiculous reports spread abroad in regard to M. de Luxembourg; but is it to be credited that a soul like his was capable of such weakness as was laid to his charge? And does it not rather exhibit the common conduct of envy and malignity which, in the lifetime of men of the first order, are incessantly endeavouring to tarnish the lustre of their reputation?

LETTER CXLIII

To the Same

Paris, Friday, February 9, 1680.

I see you are in the midst of the pleasures of the carnival, my beautiful dear ; you give little *private* suppers to eighteen or twenty ladies : I am well acquainted with your mode of life, and the heavy expenses you incur at Aix, but yet, amidst all this bustle, I fancy you contrive to have plenty of rest. We say sometimes I will have pleasure for my money ; but I think I hear you say, I will have rest for mine ; take your rest, then, and enjoy, at least, this advantage. I cannot help being surprised that a minuet-tune does not tempt you sometimes. What ! not a single step ! no motion of the shoulders ! Quite insensible ! It is not to be believed, it is unnatural ; I never yet knew you sit still on these occasions, and, were I to draw such inferences as I commonly do, I should imagine you much worse than you say you are.

There was yesterday evening an enchanting entertainment at the Hôtel de Condé. The Princess of Conti named one of the Duke's daughters, with the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon. First was the christening, then the dinner ; but what a dinner ! Then a play, but what a play ! Interspersed with fine pieces of music, and the best opera-dancers. A theatre built by the fairies ; such perspectives, orange-trees loaded with fruits, and flowers, festoons, pilasters, scenes, and other decorations ; in short, the whole expense of the evening cost no less than two thousand louis-d'ors, all for the sake of the pretty Princess.

The opera (of *Proserpine*) is superior to every other. The Chevalier tells me he has sent you several of the airs, and that he saw a gentleman [1] who said he had sent you the words ; I dare say you will like it. There is a scene in it,[2] between

[1] Quinault.

[2] See the second scene of the first act.

Mercury and Ceres, which requires no interpreter to be understood ; it must have been approved, since it has been performed ; but you will judge for yourself.

The poisoning affair is grown quite flat ; nothing new is said of it. The report is that there will be no more blood spilt ; you will make your own reflections, as we do. The Abbé Colbert is made coadjutor of Rouen. They talk of a journey into Flanders. No one knows what this assembling of the forces portends.

Friar Ange has raised Marshal de Bellefond from the dead ; he has cured his lungs, that were incurable. Madame de Coulanges and I have been to visit the Grand Master,[1] who has been almost at death's door for a fortnight past ; his gout had returned : add to this an oppression which made every one suppose he was at his last gasp ; cold sweats, light-headedness ; in short, he was as ill as it was possible to be. The physicians could give him no relief ; he sent for Friar Ange, who has cured him, and brought him from the very gates of death, by the gentlest and most agreeable medicines ; the oppression went off, the gout fell back into his knees and feet, and he is now out of danger.

Adieu, my dear child ! I still lead the same life, either in the suburbs or with these good widows ; sometimes here, sometimes eating chicken with Madame de Coulanges ; but always pleased to think I am gliding down the stream with old Time, and hastening the happy moment when I shall see you again.

LETTER CXLIV

To the Same

Paris, Friday, February 23, 1680.

Indeed, my child, this has been a very pretty week for the Grignans ; should Providence favour the elder brother in

[1] The Duke de Lude.

proportion as it has the younger, we might soon expect to see him in a charming situation. In the meantime, I think it no disagreeable thing to have brothers in such favour. The Chevalier had scarcely returned thanks for his pension of a thousand crowns when he was chosen, out of eight or ten persons of quality and merit, to be an attendant upon the Dauphin, with a salary of two thousand crowns; so here are appointments to the value of nine thousand livres a year, in the space of three days. He immediately went back to St. Germain with his second acknowledgments, for it seems he had been appointed in his absence, while he was here in Paris. His personal merit has greatly contributed to this choice; his distinguished reputation, his strict honour and probity, and the regularity of his conduct, have been remarked; and it is the general opinion that His Majesty could not have made a better choice. There are but eight persons named yet, Dangeau, d'Antin, Clermont, Sainte-Maure, Matignon, Chiverni, Florensac, and Grignan.[1] The last is universally approved. Permit me, then, to pay my compliments of congratulation to M. de Grignan, the coadjutor, and yourself.

My son sets out to-morrow; he has read the reproaches you make him; possibly the charms of the Court he wishes to leave and where he has so handsome an establishment, will make him change his opinion. We have prevailed on him not to be in a hurry, but to wait quietly till he meets with the temptation of a greater sum than he gave.

You have given me a specimen of M. de Grignan's joy by my own, in hearing that you are better. As your complaints are no longer continual, I am in great hopes that by taking care of yourself, using a milk diet, and giving up writing, you will in the end restore my daughter to me as lovely as ever.

I am charmed with Montgobert's sincerity: had she always written me word you were well I should never have given credit to her: she has managed the whole business to a miracle, and has won my heart by her candour; so natural is it for us to love not to be deceived. May heaven preserve you, my dear, in this

[1] These were afterwards reduced to six, viz. Mess. Dangeau, d'Antin, Sainte-Maure, Chiverni, Florensac, and Grignan.

prosperous ſtate, which gives us all such flattering hopes ! But to return to the Grignans, for we seem to have forgotten them. Nothing else is talked of here. Nothing but what is complimentary passes in this house ; one has scarcely done when another begins. I have not seen either of them since the Chevalier has been made a Lady of Honour, as M. de Rochefoucauld calls it. He will write you all the news much better than I can possibly do. It is supposed that Madame de Soubise will not be one of the travelling party. See how long my letter is growing ! Well, I will only mention La Voisin's affair, and conclude.

She was not burnt on Wednesday, as I wrote you word ; the sentence was not executed till yeſterday. She knew her fate on the Monday, a very extraordinary circumſtance ! In the evening she said to those who guarded her : " What ! no *media noche* ! " She ate with them at midnight out of whim, for it was no faſt-day, drank plentifully of wine, and sung several drinking songs. On Monday she received the queſtion ordinary and extraordinary. She had now dined, and slept nearly eight hours. She was confronted, while under the torture, with Mesdames de Dreux and Le Feron, and several more. Her answers have not yet transpired, but everyone expects to hear ſtrange things. She supped in the evening, and, lacerated and disjointed as she was, gave a loose to her excess, to the disguſt of everyone present. They endeavoured to make her sensible of her ill conduct, and that she would be much better employed in thinking of God and singing devout hymns, than such songs, upon which she sung a psalm or two in mockery, and then fell asleep. Wednesday was spent in the like confronting, drinking, and singing ; she absolutely refused to let her confessor come near her. In short, on the Thursday, that is yeſterday, they denied her all kinds of food, excepting only a little broth, of which she complained greatly, seeming to be apprehensive that she should not have ſtrength to carry her through the business of the day.

She came from Vincennes to Paris in a coach ; she seemed embarrassed, and as if she wished to conceal what she felt. They would have had her confess, but she would not hear of it.

At five o'clock she was bound and set on the sledge, dressed in white, with a taper in her hand. She was extremely red in the face, and was seen to push away the confessor and the crucifix with great violence. Madame de Chaulnes, Madame de Sully, the Countess (de Fiesque), myself, and several others, saw her pass by the Hôtel de Sully. When she came to the church of Notre-Dame she refused to pronounce the *amende-honorable* ; and at the Grève she ſtruggled with all her might to prevent their taking her out of the sledge : she was, however, dragged out by main force, and made to sit down on the pile, to which she was bound by iron chains, and then covered over with ſtraw ; she swore prodigiously, and pushed away the ſtraw five or six times ; but at length the fire increased, she sunk out of sight, and her ashes are by this time floating in the air. This is the end of Madame Voisin, celebrated for her crimes and her impiety. One of the judges, to whom my son happened to mention his surprise at persons being burnt alive, in a slow fire, made answer : " My dear sir, there are some indulgences granted to the women in favour of their sex." " How, pray, sir ? Are they ſtrangled ? " " No, sir, they are covered with faggots and the executioner tears off their heads with iron hooks." So you see, my child, this is not so dreadful as we have been told it was. How do you find yourself after this little ſtory ? It made my blood run cold in my veins. One of the wretches that were hanged the other day had begged her life of M. de Louvois, promising to make considerable discoveries, but was refused. " Very well," replied she, " I promise you no torments shall make me speak." Upon this she was put to the torture, and so severely that she was very near dying under it, as one of her accomplices had juſt done. A physician ſtood by to feel her pulse all the while—but mum for that. This woman then suffered all this without uttering a word. At the place of execution juſt before she was placed on the pile, she cried out that she had something to say ; when silence being commanded she presented herself heroically and exclaimed : " Gentlemen, pray be so good as to present my reſpects to M. de Louvois, and tell him that I have kept my word. Come, friend, make an end of your work." She was

dispatched immediately. What say you to this kind of heroism? I could tell you a thousand such stories were it possible to crowd them all into a letter.

I have given you this as a sample of the agreeable topics that form our present conversations, while you are carousing, dancing, and feasting. I should be very glad to hear some particulars of your entertainments. I know you do nothing else during the holidays, and you are in the right to make hay while the sun shines, for Lent is at hand, which will put an end to all.

LETTER CXLV

To the Same

Paris, Friday, March 1, 1680.

I must talk to you a little of the opera. I have not yet seen it, nor am I very curious to run after such diversions; but they tell me it is very fine: several, who were there, were so obliging as to think of you and me. I did not mention it to you, because, as they made me *Ceres* and you *Proserpine*, it follows, of course, that M. de Grignan must be *Pluto*; and I was frightened to death lest he should make his chorus answer me:—

Une mère vaut-elle un epoux? [1]

It was this I dreaded; for, as to the verse before that:—

Pluton aime mieux que Ceres,[2]

I should not have troubled myself about it. But, this apart, I make no doubt, my dear, but that we shall come together again, and I live but in that hope. Your Elysian Fields are doubtless very pleasant; you enjoy the carnival in its utmost extent; here we have only the shadow of it. The whole Court is upon the road; numbers are gone into the country, and we had determined to do so, too, thinking the sun would have

[1] Is a mother to be compared to a husband?
[2] Ceres in love must yield to Pluto.

proved faithful to the King ; but there is so ſtrange an alteration in the weather that I do not know what will become of us.

They write from Villers-Coterets that their time passed very agreeably there, though I do not find that the visits to the chariot with grey liveries were public ; but the regard is not the less for that. A present was made of ten thousand louis-d'ors in ſtepping into the carriage, and a ſervice of ſilver gilt ; liberality is great on both ſides, and they diſtribute what they receive. But you will know more of the Court news than anyone, for you have at present a resident there who will inform you of all that passes. It is not your brother, for he is at his quarters. We shall endeavour to settle his affairs upon the beſt footing we can for him, because they happen to be my own at the same time ; as for him, all he desires is, like the wolf in the fable,[1] to enjoy his liberty, and be independent. This, with the reserve of three thousand louis-d'ors, would make him completely happy ; I have not, however, been in so violent a hurry ; I have spared no pains, and even ſtraitened myself to make his fortune ; but I should be sorry to do so to send him after all to Quimper. I muſt take care of my own affairs, and think this is the time to do it honourably.

The other day a gentleman of Brittany was ſtabbed as he was going into a ballroom, by two men dressed in women's clothes, one of whom held him, while the other very deliberately ſtruck him to the heart. Young d'Harrouïs, who happened to arrive at the time, was extremely surprised and shocked to see this person, whom he knew extremely well, lying upon the ground in full dress, bloody and dead ; the account of it ſtruck my imagination very forcibly. That wretched son of Madame de Valançai's was taken ill and died juſt as he was on the point of commencing a lawsuit againſt all the family ; everybody is rejoiced at his death : it seldom happens, I think, that a man has the civility to die when all the world wishes it. The Grand Maſter (M. du Lude) is recovering by degrees at St. Germain ; our alarm on account of his illness was according to the reſpective dates of our acquaintance, that is to say, mine very great, Madame de Coulanges somewhat more, and others

[1] La Fontaine's fable of the Wolf and the Dog.

infinitely greater than hers. But this was carried off so well, and we concealed our sorrow with so much address that no one could have perceived it ; and to hide it still more effectually, we submitted to the insupportable martyrdom of living at Court always dressed, and always charming. In short, it was as difficult to be discovered as the devotions of a certain person whom you mentioned so humorously to Madame de L'Estrange. It is whispered, however, that poor Karman had nocturnal weepings, that she beat her head against the wall, and proved herself a most faithful friend by sounding the trumpet of affliction. We were there three times, for I do not wish to conceal these visits from you. However, I have quite lost the remembrance of what is past.[1]

Adieu, my best love ! Hasten to your amusements. We shall be in no such hurry if we go to Livri. Say what you please of your suppers. I have a very good opinion of them, for I know what they are.

LETTER CXLVI

To the Same

Livri, Ash Wednesday, March 6, 1680.

We have spent Shrovetide here ; the fine weather on Saturday determined us. I have a notion you would have been pleased with our plan, as it somewhat resembles the good taste you display in suiting your ribands and other parts of your dress to each other, and softening your scarlets with a mixture of brown. In like manner, we have lowered the lustre of our carnival with a dash of the filemot of these woods ; we had the finest weather imaginable ; the gardens appeared extremely neat, and the prospect was very fine ; add to this the melody of the birds, who already began to declare the appearance of

[1] This is a jest on the pretended and mistaken idea that M. de Lude was her lover. Menage ranks him as one of the four noted for their witticisms, who were all Angevins. The three others were Bautru, Jarzai, and the Prince de Guémené.

spring, which I assure you we thought a thousand times more musical than the cries of Paris. I thought much of you, my dear child ; good God, with what fervour do I love you ! I begin to think you dearer to me than ever.

We are all here, the good Abbé of the abbey, the Bishop of Rennes, the Abbé du Pile, M. de Coulanges, and your humble servant. I wished Corbinelli to have been of the party, but he remained at Paris to be present at the wedding of one of M. Mandate's sons ; he would have filled his place here very well.

Our time does not hang at all heavily upon our hands : we walk, chat, play at chess, or at cards occasionally, read some short letters of Pascal's, some plays, and the *Princess of Cleves*, which I make our parsons read, who are highly delighted with it ; we keep a good house ; young Coulanges has his song-book with him : in short, we are as merry as possible.

Your letter of the 24th was brought to me here, for all my thoughts are employed about you ; but, notwithstanding these dear letters, I am not without my apprehensions and disquietudes. We return to Paris this evening, where I shall close my packet. Let me entreat you, my dear child, not to begin writing again—nothing can be so injurious to you : let me enjoy the pleasure of thinking that since I can do you no good, I at least do you no harm.

Heavens ! How strange it is that you do not mention a single word of the good fortune of your two brothers-in-law ! Or, rather, how mortifying, that seventeen days should slide away since it has rained gold from heaven upon them, and I do not yet know how you relish the shower ! We who are all in raptures at it, begin to think no more of it than a thing we had been accustomed to.

I fancy our *d'Evreux* is gone to his charming Bishopric, for the *handsome Abbé* is a name that is now to be disposed of. This Bishopric is worth twenty-two thousand livres a year, though I called it only twenty. I likewise thought that Condé had been only ten leagues from St. Germain ; it seems it is fifteen ; but there has been no harm done : the park is one of the most beautiful spots in the universe ; a river, which runs

through the midſt of it, forms the fineſt piece of water that can be seen: there is ſtag-hunting. It was formerly the residence of Cardinal du Perron.[1] I hope you will some day favour us with a word or two on this subject, as well as on the Chevalier's place, who, in two days, had an income of nine thousand livres a year dropped upon him from the clouds: I cannot yet help thinking it is all a dream.

You speak with great affection and good sense of my son. You are perfectly right in taking it for granted that I have said everything to him that is possible to be said, in regard to his extravagant desire of selling his commission. I have unquestionable evidences of this folly; but at length I intend to think, for the firſt time in my life, of my own intereſt. He has set me the example; I will take his burden off my shoulders, which weighed lightly when he liked it himself, but which now weighs more than forty thousand crowns. I am determined to be pleased with this relief, which I should never have thought of but for him; on the contrary, I was delighted with his situation; but I change as he changes. I also like my liberty as well as he does.

We are going, perhaps for the laſt time in our lives, to set our eſtates upon the beſt footing we can, eat up our provisions, sleep away four or five months, and then let every one shift for himself. I think, my deareſt child, of the buſtle you have been in for these two or three days, whilſt we have been employed so differently. I have a notion that you want to be at Grignan; but take my advice, and let this month and a half of the next pass firſt, for even then the winter will hardly have left it. I fancy you have other motives than jealousy, though Montgobert writes me word, in your own letter, that you are jealous without knowing it, and that M. de Grignan is in love without believing it; what an excellent secretary! I conjure you to give yourself no more uneasiness about your brother's conduct than you do about your husband's amours. Your brother insiſts ſtrongly that he has no thoughts of becoming a Breton. He is an artful creature; we are, however, upon very good terms with each other. Let us leave the disposal of

[1] Bishop of Evreux before he was made Archbishop of Sens.

everything to Providence ; if it was not for this reliance, I should be unhappy indeed.

I have it from very good authority that there has been a ball at Villers-Coterets, at which there were masks. Mademoiselle de Fontanges was there like a ſtar of the firſt magnitude, and was ſuperbly dreſſed by the hand of Madame de Montespan. The latter danced moſt divinely ; Fontanges would also dance a minuet she had not practiſed for a long time ; in the attempt her feet seemed to have forgotten what they were doing. The courant was no better ; in short, she made but one curtsey. I shall soon inform you of what I learn at Paris.

I muſt contradict what I said about La Voisin being damned, for her confessor has declared that she pronounced the words *Jesu* ! *Maria* ! in the midſt of the flames ; so that, for what we know she may be a saint. You see how careful I am, not to mislead you by false reports.

I am now at Paris, my dareſt child ; it is exactly seven in the evening. We were so unwilling to leave the pleasant abbey that we did not set out till it was late ; you know how we used to amuse ourselves with chatting upon the little bridge. The weather was the fineſt possible. Madame de Coulanges informs me that she has no news to send me yet. To-day His Majeſty will see his daughter-in-law for the firſt time.

LETTER CXLVII

To the Same

Paris, Friday, March 15, 1680.

I am much afraid we shall lose M. de la Rochefoucauld ; his fever ſtill continues ; he received the sacrament yeſterday ; the tranquillity of his mind is really worthy of admiration. He has settled all affairs of conscience, and his disorder and the

prospect of approaching dissolution give him no concern ; you would think it was his neighbour at the point of death. He hears the physicians dispute without being the least affected by it, and the contentions of the Englishman and Friar Ange without saying a word. I return to this verse :

Trop au-dessus de lui, pour y prêter l'esprit.[1]

He would not see Madame de la Fayette yesterday, on account of her tears, and because he was to receive the sacrament ; but he sent about noon to know how she was. Believe me, my child, he has not passed his life in making useless reflections ; he has rendered death so familiar that the prospect is neither new nor terrific to him. M. de Marsillac arrived the day before yesterday at midnight, so overwhelmed with grief that I do not think even you could feel more for me. It was a long time before he could compose himself ; at length he came in, when he found M. de Rochefoucauld sitting in his chair, with an air very little different from that he usually wore. As M. de Marsillac is the only one of his children who may be said to enjoy his friendship, it was thought he would be himself affected at seeing him ; but of this, however, there was not the smallest appearance, and he even did not name his illness to him. His son, unable to contain himself any longer, withdrew to give vent to his grief ; when, after a great deal of altercation, Gourville being against and Langlade for the Englishman, each of them supported by different parties in the family, and the two Æsculapian chiefs keeping up all the warmth of their natural animosity, M. de Marsillac decided in favour of the Englishman, and yesterday, at four in the afternoon, M. de la Rochefoucauld took his medicines, and at eight repeated them again. As there is no getting admittance at present, it is difficult to learn the truth ; however, I have been told that after having been last night within an instant of giving up the ghost, through the struggle between the medicine and the gouty humour, he had so considerable an evacuation that though the fever has not yet abated there is reason to hope for a favourable issue. I

[1] Too superior to himself, to pay any attention to it.

am convinced in my own mind that he will recover ; though M. de Marsillac does not yet venture to admit a ray of hope. I can compare him, in his affections and grief, to no one but yourself, my dear child, who cannot bear the thoughts of my death. You may well believe that I shall not give him M. de Grignan's letter at present ; it shall go, however, with those that may come afterwards ; for I am convinced with Langlade, from whom I learnt all I tell you, that the remedy given will complete the cure.

I want to know how you are, after your journey to Marseilles. I must chide M. de Grignan for taking you with him ; I cannot approve of such useless jaunts. Must not you also show Toulon, Hières, Sainte Baume, Saint Maximin, and the fountain of Vaucluse to the Mesdemoiselles de Grignan ?

I am almost constantly with Madame de la Fayette, who must be totally insensible to the charms of friendship, and the affections of the heart, were she less afflicted than she is. I close this packet at her house, at nine in the evening : she has read your little note, for in spite of her fears she has hope enough to be able to read it. M. de la Rochefoucauld is still the same ; his legs begin to swell, which the Englishman does not like ; he seems certain, however, that his medicines will have the desired effect. If this be true, I shall admire the great humanity of the physicians in not tearing him piecemeal, for this will be the ruin of them all ; to take the fever out of their hands is to take the bread out of their mouths. Du Chêne is very easy about the matter, but all the others are stark mad.

LETTER CXLVIII

To the Same

Paris, Sunday, March 17, 1680.

Though this letter will not go till Wednesday, I cannot help beginning it to-day to inform you that M. de la

Rochefoucauld died last night. I am so much engrossed with this misfortune and with the extreme affliction of our poor friend,[1] that I must relieve my mind by communicating the painful event to you.

Yesterday, which was Saturday, the Englishman's medicine had done wonders: all the favourable symptoms of Friday which I mentioned to you, were increased; his friends began to sing *Te Deum* in their hearts; his lungs were clear, his head free, his fever less, his evacuations such as indicated a salutary crisis: in this state yesterday at six o'clock in the evening he relapsed, so as to leave no hope of recovery; his fever redoubled in an instant, with an oppression of the chest and delirium; in a word he was suffocated by the treacherous gout, and, notwithstanding he had a great degree of strength left even after all his bleeding, it carried him off in less than five hours, so that he expired at midnight in the arms of the Bishop of Condom. M. de Marsillac did not leave him a moment; he is under inexpressible affliction: he will find, however, some consolation in the King and the Court; and so will the rest of the family, from the place he enjoys. But when will poor Madame de la Fayette find again such a friend, such a companion, such kindness, such attention, such confidence, and such consideration for her and her son! She is infirm, confined to her room, and not like other people eternally from home. M. de la Rochefoucauld was also of a sedentary disposition; their situation rendered them necessary to each other, so that the mutual confidence and delightful friendship that subsisted between them was unequalled. Think of this, my child, and you will be convinced with me that no one could sustain a greater loss, for this is not to be repaired or obliterated even by time. I have never once quitted this disconsolate friend; she did not mix in the hurry and confusion of the family, so that she really stood in need of some pity. Madame de Coulanges has likewise acquitted herself very well on this occasion, and we shall continue to discharge our duty even at the hazard of our eyes, which are almost always filled with

[1] Madame de la Fayette.



MARIE-MADELEINE PIOCHE DE LA VERGNE

Comtesse de La Fayette

tears. You see how unluckily your letters came ; they have hitherto had no admirers but Madame de Coulanges and myself ; when the Chevalier returns, he may possibly find a proper season for presenting them : meantime, you must write one of condolence to M. de Marsillac ; he does honour to filial affection, and is a living proof that you are not alone in this respect ; but, in fact, I doubt either of you will meet with many imitators. The melancholy that reigns around me has awakened all my sensibility, and makes me feel the anguish of separation in all its horrors.

Wednesday, March 20.

Wednesday is come at last. M. de la Rochefoucauld is dead, and M. de Marsillac still inconsolable ; he confines himself so closely that he seems determined never to leave the house. The feeble constitution of Madame de la Fayette very ill supports her extreme grief. Her fever has been increased by it, and it is beyond the power of time to obliterate this dreadful loss. Pray do not fail to write me a line or two for her.

I am under great uneasiness on account of your journey. You will not be carried into Barbary indeed ; but it would be very *barbarous* if this fatigue should make you ill. It is melancholy to reflect that we are situated as it were at the opposite extremes of the globe from each other : the thought almost makes me shudder, particularly when I am on the borders of our ocean, in the way to India, as you in that to Africa. I assure you my heart very ill brooks this separation. Did you know the anguish I feel at the smallest delay in the arrival of your letters, you would then form a tolerably accurate judgment of what I suffer from this your journey.

I have not yet seen our Grignans ; they are at present at St. Germain ; the Chevalier is with his regiment. They would fain have taken me to see the Dauphiness, but I am in no hurry. M. de Coulanges has seen her ; the first glance, as Sanguine said, is rather against her ; but then she is possessed of so much good sense, worth, kindness, and affability, that it is impossible not to admire her : *s'il faut honorer Cybèle, il faut*

encore plus l'aimer (if we honour Cybele, how much more must we love her !) Her sayings are admired by every one for their wit and good sense.

Madame de Maintenon grows daily more in favour. Nothing now but perpetual conversations between her and the King, who bestows all the time he used to spend with Madame de Montespan on the Dauphiness. You may judge what effect this alteration is likely to produce. The lady of the *grey coach* [1] is extraordinarily beautiful ; the other day she crossed the ball-room through the dancers, directly to the King, without looking either to the right or to the left : they told her she did not see the Queen, which was indeed the truth. She was shown to a seat, and though there was a little confusion upon the occasion, this madcap act was not taken amiss. I have a thousand trifles of this kind in my budget for you.

Your brother is in a very gloomy mood at his garrison ; I fear the concurrence of your animal spirits, though of the same blood, will not determine his to think as you do. I thought your period admirable ; I know not whether I shall answer it ; but no matter, you guess my meaning. You seem so well pleased with the good fortune of your brothers-in-law as wholly to forget your own ; you conceal yourselves behind a curtain : I have already told you how much such conduct vexes me.

Do you not admire with me the will of Providence, that has deprived me of the gratification of talking of your concerns with M. de la Rochefoucauld, who interested himself in them so very obligingly ? Having also lost M. de Pomponne, I cannot now be of the smallest utility to you. I never met with so many extraordinary things as have come to pass since your departure. I learn that the young Bishop of Evreux is so great a favourite with the old one, that the latter has written to the King to thank him for having given him so worthy a successor.

[1] Madame de Fontanges.

LETTER CXLIX

To the Same

Paris, Saturday night, April 6, 1680.

I am going to acquaint you with a piece of news which is no longer a secret ; but you will have the pleasure of knowing it as early as anyone. Madame de Fontanges [1] is a Duchess, with a pension of 20,000 crowns. She received the compliments of her friends on the occasion yesterday in bed. The King had made her a visit publicly ; to-morrow she takes her seat, and then goes to spend her Easter at an abbey,[2] which the King has given to one of her sisters. This is a parting that will do honour to the severity of the confessor. Some people will have it that this advancement has the air of a dismission ; for my part, I believe nothing of the matter, but time will discover all. For the present, however, I can tell you that Madame de Montespan is in a great rage ; she wept immoderately yesterday. You will judge what a blow this is to her pride, which is rendered still more severe by the high favour Madame de Maintenon enjoys ; his Majesty frequently spends two hours at a time, in an afternoon, in the apartment of the latter, in so friendly and unceremonious a manner as makes it the most desirable spot in the world. Madame de Richelieu begins to feel the effects of the life of bustle she has engaged in ; the springs of her machine are visibly weakened by it. She presents everybody, without making the proper distinctions ; the little business of a lady of honour, of which she acquitted herself so well, is now quite disconcerted. She presented La Trousse and my son to the Dauphin, without naming them. She said of the Duchess of Sully, " This is one of our dancers " : she did not name Madame de Verneuil ; she was very near

[1] Marie-Angelique d'Escorailles.
[2] The Abbey of Chelles, or rather of Maubuisson.

suffering Madame de Louvois to be saluted, by mistaking her for a Duchess. In short, this place is very dangerous, and shows that trivial things frequently do more harm than the study of philosophy ; and that an inquiry after truth does not distract the brain half so much as the numberless compliments and nothings with which this lady is occupied.

M. de Marsillac appeared a little sensible to the good fortune of the charming Fontanges ; this is the first sign of life he has given. Madame de Coulanges is just come from the Court, and I have been to pay her a visit purposely, before I write to you. She is charmed with the Dauphiness, and has great reason to be so, for that Princess gave her a thousand distinguishing marks of favour. She knew her before by her letters, and the great character Madame de Maintenon had given her. She took her with her into her closet, where she retires in an afternoon with her ladies, and talked in a most delightful manner. No one, it seems, has more wit and understanding than this Princess ; she makes herself adored by the whole Court. This now is a person whom one might please, and with whom real merit cannot fail of producing very agreeable effects.

Madame de Coulanges is still besieged by our cousin [1] ; she seems to have no longer any love for him, and yet they are for ever together. The Marchioness de la Trousse is still as angry as ever ; do you know that she has changed her mind with regard to her daughter ? She could not endure her, and now she is grown fond of her ; while M. de la Trousse, who was fond of her before, now dislikes her. This disagreement in opinion has determined the fate of this young woman, and a convent is her only resource. The father neither dares to show any regard for her, nor his wife, because the lady treats everything of that kind with an insulting contempt. He must suffer all the distresses of nature, *and for whom ? for an ingrate*, who I am certain no longer loves him ; but he is so meanly submissive, that his weakness has all the effect of a passion upon him ; but never was passion accompanied with less friendship.

[1] The Marquis de la Trousse.

This, my child, is all I have to say at present, though, in a short time, I believe I shall have a large cargo. Let me know when you have received this letter, which is a little like those of Cicero.

LETTER CL

To the Same

Orleans, Wednesday, May 8, 1690.

We are arrived at this place, without having met with any extraordinary adventures by the way. The weather is delightfully fine ; the roads are admirable ; our carriage goes extremely well ; my son has lent me his horses, and has accompanied me as far as this place in person ; I assure you his company has greatly enlivened a journey that would otherwise have been dreary enough. We have chatted, argued, and read ; we still continue in the same errors, and that you know furnishes sufficient conversation. Our axle-tree broke yesterday, but in a very lucky place, and we were assisted on the occasion by a man, the very image of M. de Sotenville [1] ; a man who is fit to write Georgics, had not Virgil already saved him the trouble, so perfectly versed is he in country affairs ; he introduced his wife to us, who is, without doubt, as great in her way, as he is in his. We were two hours in this society without being at all tired, owing to the novelty of a conversation and a dialect which was indeed perfectly new to us. We made several reflections on the perfectly contented state of this gentleman, of whom it may justly be said, with Racan,

> Heureux qui se nourrit du lait de ses brebis,
> Et qui de leur toison voit filer ses habits ! [2]

The days are so long that we have not even occasion for the assistance of the most beautiful moon in the world, which

[1] The name of a character in Molière's *George Dandin.*

[2] i.e. happy the man whose flocks afford him both food and raiment.

will accompany us as far as the Loire, upon which we shall embark to-morrow. By the time you receive this letter, I shall be at Nantes; I found out yesterday that I am not farther from you here than I was at Paris: and by a line we drew upon the map we also found that Nantes is but a very little way farther from you than Paris; these are indeed but small consolations while I cannot hear from you.

Your letters will not come to Paris till to-day. They will be put up with those of Saturday, and I shall have both packets together at Nantes. I did not choose to hazard any uncertain conveyance by water; you will therefore judge that I am not a little impatient to be at Nantes.

Adieu, my dearest child! what can I say to you in such a place as this? You have certain residents about you, who will inform you of everything; I am fit for nothing but to love you, without being able to turn that qualification to your advantage; that, you will say, is a melancholy circumstance for a person of my disposition. My *worthy* assures you of his best services; I am very studious to preserve him for us all. Journeys do not agree with him so well now as formerly. I embrace you with all my heart. Your brother wants to make his speech.

[*Portion by M. de Sévigné omitted*]

LETTER *CLI

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

The Rocks, June 19, 1680.

I was detained at Nantes for a month by business. I have only been here in quiet for a fortnight. I write, my dear cousin, that I may obtain some intelligence of you and of the amiable widow. I lament that I should be here, when you are both in Paris. We are in good tune when we are together. Our conversation seldom flags, and Corbinelli contributes his share towards its support. I am here in perfect solitude;

and, considering how little I am accustomed to solitude, I bear my retirement tolerably well. Reading is a great comfort to me. I have a little library here which would be worthy of you ; but you would be still more worthy of me, and, if we were neighbours, we would establish a free intercourse of mind and books. On this subject I must return, as usual, to Providence, who has placed us where it has thought fit. It is difficult to comprehend, that a young lady of Burgundy, brought up at Court, should have wandered into Brittany; but Providence has so well disposed of the rest that I always honour it, and regard with reverence all its dispensations. The road it has marked out for you, has been rugged and painful ; I feel it perhaps more than I ought ; but after all, we must submit to what is bitter, as well as to what is sweet.

These are the true reflections of a person who passes a portion of her life alone, in the midst of woods, where the thoughts can only be gloomy and solid.

If I am fortunate enough to find you in Paris at my return, you will console me for all my dullness, you will rejoice my heart, and enlighten my mind. Amiable father and daughter, I embrace you both.

LETTER CLII

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan

The Rocks, Friday, June 21, 1680.

The bad weather still continues ; there is no stirring out without being wet to the skin. Sometimes, indeed, we fix our faith and hopes upon St. John, and venture to step in between two clouds, and walk a few paces, when they close again, and pour their contents on our presumptuous heads. This has happened to us two or three times ; and therefore, to guard against it in the future, we mean to go armed with hats, cloaks, and riding-hoods and bonnets, and to fix a kind of tent at the

end of the great walk by the mall, and another at the end of the long walk, where we may sit under cover, and read, play, talk and amuse ourselves. You have now all the news of our woods ; I have a great inclination to send them to the *Mercure Gallant*.[1]

What you say of that paper is truly laughable ; I thank you for the extract you have sent me. If I thought I could again find in it the handsome Mademoiselle de Sévigné, and the entertainment on board the galley, which M. de Vivonne did *not* give to the Countess de Grignan, I should be at the expense of purchasing it ; but as I am at the same time afraid I shall not meet with a description of the entertainments at your Rochecourbière, I shall content myself with borrowing it at Vitré.

I wonder you should say the device[2] is not as applicable to you as to the Dauphiness. I perhaps enter into your meaning ; it requires, you think, a person who has a great share of wit. I do not mean to praise you, but it is truly suited to you ; and there is a very gallant turn in the thought, that there are more charms within than without ; be not then ungrateful to honest Clement, for nothing can be happier. I retract what I said when writing in a hurry ; you have convinced me that I was to blame in making a jest of the Count of Oldenbourg ; for as you say, are we not sufficiently accustomed to German names ? This, however, cannot be one of your friends, as he always resided in Sweden ; but the name was not at all harsh, it was the wicked freedom of my pen that made it so. Here is another jest for you. My maids, seeing me very much busied with the chaplet, took it into their heads to have a little amusement, by writing me the letter which I enclose you, and which succeeded so well, that they were as much frightened, as we were once at Fresne, by a trick which Scudéry resented rather too severely ; do you remember it ? They saw me send you the letter, and were divided between a strong desire to laugh,

[1] A newspaper of the fashionable world.
[2] Il piu grato nasconde.

and the fear of offending me. "Good God!" says Helen, "would you make a jest of my mistress?" "It is only for amusement," says Mary, "it will make the Countess laugh." At length, after fidgeting about me a considerable time, till they thought they had found the lucky minute, they confessed that they had got Demonville to write the letter, and hoped I would take it, as it was meant, merely as a jest and not send it to you; that for three nights they had not had a wink of sleep, for fear I should be angry with them, and concluded with asking my pardon. So you see your mother is returned to the follies which used to divert you so much at Livri, and which I heartily wish may divert you again. You have therefore only to inform me why you sent me this chaplet, of which I know nothing, and I will immediately return you my thanks. If you wish it I can cite M. de la Rochefoucauld, who was as easily deceived as myself; but he had so much merit in other respects, that I cannot with justice draw a comparison or consolation from him.

Have you seen the Flanders gazette? It is enough to make you despise all human wisdom, since we are not exempt from the malice of fortune even after death. "M. de la Rochefoucauld," says this gazette, "has left behind him a paper, in which he declares that Gourville has always served him faithfully and usefully, and that he heartily repents not having left to him the whole management of his grandson's marriage with Mademoiselle de Louvois, respecting which he was deceived." Can anything be more ridiculous than this assertion, come from what quarter it will? It is absolutely diabolical.

I am informed that the conversations between the King and Madame de Maintenon increase more and more; that they last from six o'clock till ten; that the daughter-in-law sometimes makes a visit there, but a very short one; that she generally finds each of the two parties in an elbow-chair, and that after the visit is over, they resume the thread of their discourse. A friend [1] writes me word that no one approaches the lady but with respect and homage, and that the Ministers

[1] Madame de Coulanges.

make their court to her, as others do to them.[1] Madame de la Sablière in her incurables is perfectly cured of one disorder which was for a long time thought incurable [2]; a cure which brings with it more real satisfaction than any other would have done. She is at present in a very happy state of mind; is religious, truly so, and makes a proper use of her free will. But is it not God, who has wrought this change in her heart? Is it not God, who has given her this will? Is it not God, who has delivered her from the power of the demon? Is it not God, who has caused her to walk, and has directed her footsteps in the right way? Is it not God who has inspired her with a desire to be wholly His? The work is completed; God has thus crowned with success the gifts He has been pleased to impart. If this is what you call free will, Heaven, in its mercy, make me a partaker of it. We shall resume St. Augustine: I return to my friend.

She is to bring Madame de la Fayette to visit this amiable convert; this may, perhaps, be the only way to convince Madame de la Fayette that her grief may admit of a cure. Hitherto she appears to me totally insensible to everything else, even to what relates to her son; but who knows what is in store for her? This I often say with regard to the Baron: How would you have me marry him? He is at present attached to his fat cousin de V . . . , of whom he speaks very humorously; this is a good way to make his fortune! See how that little insignificant *Chiverni* has found the way to insinuate himself so effectually into the good graces of Madame de Colbert, that he is to marry her niece. Depend upon it, you will soon find that fine estate of his taken from nurse, all his debts paid, and himself out of danger of a prison, which would otherwise most assuredly have been his lot. But what can be said to all

[1] Louvois, and Marsillac, then Duke de la Rochefoucauld, had endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between the King and Madame de Montespan. They wished to ruin Madame de Maintenon. But Louis related the whole to her. She herself wrote two months after: "This explanation has fixed the King . . . he owns that M. de Louvois is a more dangerous man than the Prince of Orange." This makes us feel Madame de Sévigné's expression in all its force.

[2] She had been passionately in love with M. de la Fare.

this? It is the will of Providence. I see so much waywardness in your brother's destiny, that I cannot bear to speak or think of it. I see no dear little grandchildren likely to come from that quarter; but I see yours already come, beautiful as the day; and I see that your health is improved; this delights me; but I entreat you, my dearest child, not to make a bad use of this amendment, and always to have before your eyes the danger of a relapse.

I have no other answer to make you upon what St. Augustine says, except that I hear and understand him when he tells me, and repeats to me five hundred times in the same book, that all things depend, as the apostle says, "not on him that willeth, nor on him that runneth, but on God, that showeth mercy to whom it pleaseth him; that it is not for any merit in man that God bestows his grace, but according to his own good pleasure; that man may not glory in his own strength, seeing he receives all things from God." His whole book is in this strain, filled with passages from scripture, the writings of the Apostle Paul, and the homilies of the church. He calls our free will a deliverance and an aptitude to love God, because we are no longer under the dominion of the devil, and are chosen from all eternity, according to the decrees of the Almighty before all ages. When I read in this book the following passage, "How could God call men to judgment, if they were not free agents?" I confess I am at a loss to understand it, and am disposed to think it a mystery; but as free will cannot put our salvation in our own power, and as we must always be dependent on God, I have no desire to understand it better, and will endeavour, as much as possible, to remain in a state of humility and dependence. If you have *La Predestination des Saints (The Predestination of the Saints)*, read it my child, and you will find much more on this subject than I can possibly say to you.

We have a little Huguenot girl here who pretends that infants, who die without being baptized, may enter the kingdom of heaven in virtue of the faith of their parents. "Surely," said I to her, "you are not in earnest? Can a child of Adam, can any portion of that corrupt mass, see and know God?

There would be no occasion for a Redeemer, if we could go to heaven without this mediation. Indeed, young lady, this is downright heresy." This startled my little Huguenot. I readily gave up to her the abuses and superstitions that had crept into religion ; I did not urge the doctrine of the holy sacrament ; I contented myself with declaring that I was ready to die for the existence of Christ. I asked her why she rejected the invocation of saints, when those of her religion are recommended to pray for each other. In short, this little dispute revived my spirits, when I was as dull as the grave ; for she came with Madame de la Hamélinière, whose husband is a relation of yours. This Madame de la Hamélinière is a species of beauty that you have formerly seen at Paris. She has a gallant, with whom she is under no sort of restraint ; she is sometimes two or three months together at his house. She goes with him to Paris and Bourbon, as one of his family, and his equipage attends her everywhere. She is at present here, driving six fine greys ; the coach, coachmen, and horses, are all the Marquis's ; her whole conversation is about him. She is very seldom with her husband, whose estate, by the by, is under sequestration for debt ; for your good cousin has contrived to ruin himself, like a fool as he is. This woman, who has nothing to do, spends all her time in visits. She has darted from a distance of twenty leagues, and fallen upon this house like a bomb, when I least expected her. I fled to my woods, to delay, as long as I could, the punishment I was to undergo ; I was, however, obliged to return, and I found in my house this fine personage, whom I hardly knew, with a retinue equal to that of Madame de Chevigni at Fresne ; a little girl, a young lady, curled and powdered to the top of her head (the Huguenot I have been speaking of), and another awkward creature. I was at first in one of my humours to say a thousand rude things in spite of myself ; to throw down a chair, and make fifty ridiculous apologies and compliments. "Pray, Madam, excuse me ! Surely, Madam, you would not have me go first ! " and so on. At length we sit down to supper, and to stop the continual yawnings with which I am seized, I amuse myself with disputing with the Huguenot, which effectually rouses

me. This woman has been ſtationed here these three days, so that I now begin to be somewhat used to her ; but I hope that as she has not sense enough to be pleased with the freedoms I take of doing whatever I please, and of leaving her to herself, to go and superintend my workmen, or to write, she will be offended, and give me the felicity of an adieu, which is so pleasing when we have bad, and so mortifying when we have good, company. Such is the troop I have quartered upon me at present, and of whom I shall be rid when God pleases. Of this, however, I can assure you ; that I shall not entreat them to ſtay. I beseech you, my child, to send me no answer to all this. I love to gossip ; it is my heart's desire.

Mademoiselle du Plessis is ſtill in her convent ; if you knew how she acted the afflicted daughter, and how she ſtole the casket while her mother was dying, you would smile at the manner in which virtues and vices are thrown indiscriminately together in these provinces ; for I found the souls of the country-people as ſtraight as a line, loving virtue as naturally as horses trot. The hand which throws this medley into the universe, knows perfectly well what it does, and turns everything to its own glory ; all is for the beſt. M. de la Garde will say more to you on this subject than I can. He is extremely pleasant : he has written me a long and friendly letter, in which he tells me he is going to see you. I do not think he has finished his business : if you were to ask me what business, you would puzzle me extremely.

LETTER CLIII

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, Auguſt 14, 1680.

At length I am in the solitude of my woods, enjoying the silence and abſtinence I have so long wished for. Monday I quitted the whirlpool at Rennes, which exceeded everything of the kind I ever met with ; because, being confined within a less compass, its force was the more violent. At my return

here, I found your letter, which gave me double uneasiness, both for the poor Count and you, for your health is by no means in a ſtate to bear his ſufferings. It is, indeed, some consolation to me, to find that you have no ſhare in the game; though, to ſay the truth, it is far from being an entertaining one to him. While the phyſicians, with pomp of erudition, declare his diſorder *arthritic*, you give it the plain and homely appellation of *the gout*. You relate, very divertingly, the martyrdom you made him ſuffer by your officious care, and how boldly you applied your Hungary water, which was preciſely the thing you ſhould not have done; for it is the worſt thing in the world for the nerves, in attacks either of gout or rheumatiſm, which are twin-brothers; only that the latter bears the arms of the family with an abatement,[1] as being the younger branch, and does not return like the cruel gout; but as to humour and pain, they are of the ſame ſtuff. You were, therefore, the unjuſt executioner of the juſt will of God. I heartily wiſh that this complaint, which, like mine, began ſo unaccountably may go off again without any ſerious conſequences; I wiſh it, for I did not walk the next day on the fineſt terrace in the world. Reſt yourſelf, then, my dear little nurſe, eat, drink, ſleep, but do not write. It is on this occaſion that Montgobert will be of ſovereign utility; when you have written three lines, ſhe will take the pen, tell me everything, and leave my dear child to her repoſe.

If, as you ſay, you cannot be eaſy on one ſide without being tortured on the other, I am preciſely in the ſame ſituation; you will conceive my meaning, without my explaining it; and as to the heart, my ſcales are very different from yours, they take a great deal of reaſon and gratitude to make up the weight; which reminds me of a queſtion that is ſometimes aſked, Which is heavieſt, a pound of feathers, or a pound of lead? It is juſt the ſame, only the one takes up more room than the other.

Return my thanks to the Archbiſhop of Arles for the kind and obliging letter he has written me: he is ſo good as to remember me, by mentioning you. Ah, why cannot I fly to

[1] *Briſure*: a term in heraldry.

Grignan, to return him my thanks in person, to embrace you by the way and *possess* you a little, as they say in this country? It is really mortifying to be so corporeal, that we cannot stir a step without dragging this tenement of clay about with us. You will tell me, perhaps, that the imagination travels a great way; that we think, and this is, in reality, the same thing. No, no, my dear; there is a wide difference; I should not think myself happy unless both my body and mind enjoyed the pleasure of seeing you. Thank heaven, they are both a little more at ease, since my return to fasting and solitude. I never knew what it was to want a recruit of spirits so much as in this Rennes journey. I was the object of the attention, civilities, and marks of friendship, of the whole family of de Chaulnes, and was left alone to defend myself against a thousand others. I never was so beset in my life, the whole province of Brittany was there; and you know there is nothing lost with the Bretons; they always keep up their number, so that the crowd was without example. The last day of my stay, two of *your father's*[1] nieces came; one was as like Madame de St. Géran, as two drops of water are like each other; the other was a pretty *brunette*. I was so prepossessed in their favour that I thought they danced better than anyone else. Their eyes are very expressive. There was another lady niece, who understands his philosophy almost as well as yourself. I also saw two nephews; but the most pleasant of all was a Jesuit, hampered between the menaces of the Society, and his natural regard to the memory of his uncle; so that the poor father had always his mouth *full of hot peas*, as M. de la Rochefoucauld said on a certain occasion; and did not dare to speak a single word distinctly. But I can talk of nothing but Rennes! And cannot you guess the reason? as the song says, Adieu, my dear child, I am far from hating you.

[1] Descartes.

LETTER CLIV

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, September 11, 1680.

I could not have supposed that a letter, informing me you intend coming to Paris this winter, and that I should see you there, would draw tears from my eyes ; yet such was the effect of the unutterable joy I felt at this assurance, added to the sublime sentiments of that wise and holy child.[1] No, no, it is not always sorrow that opens the fountains of the eyes ; tears flow from many different sensations. You have often laughed at me for being touched with the beauty of certain sentiments in which I had no concern. It was impossible for me to help being moved ; judge then how much I must be so in hearing so affecting and virtuous a speech as that of Mademoiselle de Grignan. What resolution ! what courage ! I am sure there is great reliance to be placed on what she says ; she has long weighed this resolution in her mind ; she thinks firmly as you very justly express yourself, and what she has once determined is irrevocable. Your predictions are very just ; I knew not on what you grounded your seeming certainty, you are at length determined by the most important, and at the same time the most advantageous circumstances that could happen to your family : it is a decisive stroke ; on these occasions, a journey must be undertaken *in ogni modo* (in any way). Let me know everything that is to follow upon this : acquaint me with all your plans that I may, as much as possible, accommodate mine to them.

I had not the least idea of the manner of the old Bishop's (Evreux) death. It is really a shocking circumstance ! Well might you say it would surprise me ; I was completely struck : I see the hand of God guiding the determination of the good Prelate in a most extraordinary manner ; guiding him to be torn in pieces, massacred, in short quartered alive ! Observe

[1] Mademoiselle de Grignan, who wished to devote herself to a life of religion.

how many different circumstances concurred to bring about the fate that was allotted him ! In the first place, to think of venturing on a journey in a carriage, at eighty years of age with new horses hardly broken in ; no postilion ; and against the remonstrances of his friends. Nothing availed ; he was doomed to perish ; he was destined to break his neck ; and it was ordained that Messieurs de Grignan should reap the advantage of his disaster. Good fortune too never comes by halves ; what a provision is here for the Chevalier !

There is no end to the visits which overwhelm you this year ; one would think the parties were acting in concert to devour you : two tables of twelve each, in that gallery ! I am the cause of all this by mentioning to you the entertainments of M. de Chaulnes. Really this is carrying things to excess ; perhaps you will tell me, after all, you are at little or no expense at Grignan ; and I alas ! shall not fail to believe you. However, I am not to learn what the article of provisions amounts to on these occasions ; and then the gaming, how do you come off in that point ? I am thinking continually of those little rains that wet one to the skin. My child, there are people who are born to spend money wherever they may be, as others are born to have their necks broken : no place is to them a place of rest, or of retrenchment ; they attract company, pleasure, expense, as straws are attracted by amber. There is no helping it ; fate must have its course, and hie away, in a coach with four young horses and no postilion ! But Heaven be praised, my child, this will not prove your destruction ; and the old proverb may now be verified, that a lucky marriage pays for all. You have not the least reason to apprehend that this affair will fall to the ground, after the steps that have been taken ; enjoy yourself therefore in full security ; for my part, I must confess it gives me the greatest satisfaction. My father used to say, that he was a good Christian whose mind was at ease ; in that respect I am his own daughter. Have you not seen the change that has taken place among the Bishops ? Freluguet will not reach Marseilles ; Bourlemont is the man who will be neither good nor bad for you. If you ask me where he *stops* (*demeure*), I must tell you, that last year it was at the Carmelites

before the Queen.[1] Think you that Dom Côme will ſtir himself in the revenues of the vacant Bishoprics? and will the Abbé Le Jay[2] be a glorious luminary of the church? La Mousse sends me word in great wrath, that he will govern his diocese *in play*, he has so much ready wit.

It is thought that the Dauphiness is with child. Madame de Maintenon is ſtill on the very pinnacle of favour. The King spends only a few minutes with Madame de Montespan, and as little time with Madame de Fontanges, who is ſtill in a dropping way.

The Bishop of Rennes, who called upon me here on his return from Lavardin, told me, that at the induction of Madame de Chelles,[3] the ornaments of the crown, the jewels about the sun that encloses the Hoſt, the exquisite music, the perfumes, and the great number of Bishops that officiated at the ceremony, ſtruck a good country lady, who happened to be present, with such aſtonishment that she could not forbear crying aloud, "Surely I am in Paradise!" A person who sat near her, replied, "Pardon me, Madam, there are not so many Bishops there." Perhaps you will place this little ſtory with that I unluckily told you one evening in your dressing-room. I cannot help it; it is piping hot, and I could not keep it.

Say whatever you think proper to the Archbishop of my sentiments, which you may venture to answer for; I wish the same in regard to M. de Grignan and his heavenly daughter, not forgetting the earthly one. I embrace the little chits; for I will have no one forgotten. Montgobert wrote me word the other day that Paulina read Voiture's letters to her, and that she enters into the spirit of them as we do.

[1] He had ſtopped short in her sermon.
[2] Nominated to the Bishopric of Cahors.
[3] The ſiſter of Madame de Fontanges, lately made Abbess of Chelles.

LETTER CLV

To the Same

The Rocks, Sunday, September 22, 1680.

You are so much of a philosopher, my beloved child, that there is no such thing as giving vent to the transports of the heart with you. You are continually anticipating hopes ; and you pass over the joy of possession, to contemplate the hour of separation. Believe me, we ought to manage differently the blessings which Providence has in store for us. After having made you this reproach, it remains with me honestly to confess that I deserve it as much as you do, and that it is impossible for anyone to be more alarmed at the cruel rapidity of time, or to have a stronger foretaste of those sorrows which generally follow in the train of pleasures. In short, my child, this life is a perpetual chequer—work of good and evil, pleasure and pain. When in possession of what we desire, we are only so much the nearer losing it ; and when at a distance from it, we live in the expectation of enjoying it again. It is our business, therefore, to take things as God is pleased to send them. For my part, I am resolved to indulge myself in the delightful hope of seeing you, without any mixture of alloy.

You are very unjust, my love, in the judgment you pass upon yourself ; you say that though people at first think you agreeable, upon a longer acquaintance they cease to love you ; it is precisely the reverse ; you have a certain air of superiority that makes people afraid of you and despair of ever being admitted into the number of your friends ; but when once they know you, it is impossible not to be attached to you ; and if any of your acquaintance seem to shun you, it is only because they love you, and cannot bear the thought of not being so much loved in return as they wish. I have heard many persons extol the charms of your friendship to the skies, and afterwards reflect on their own want of merit, which prevented them from preserving that happiness : thus each blames himself for a

degree of coldness ; but where there is no real cause of complaint on either side, it seems only to require a little leisurely conversation to be good friends again.

Really, my child, you have improved wonderfully upon what I told you respecting Brancas. What you say of him is as humorous as it is true ; it is exactly in this way that he has constantly acted between his friends ; he is for having good universally communicated, and is desirous of entering into godly bonds with Madame de Coulanges, and obtaining that pretty woman for a friend, as he gave her to Cardinal d'Estrées ; for he was never easy till he made him her visitor in ordinary. This whim has highly amused me, for I know him well, and it is exactly his character. There was a time, indeed, that he could not bear the thought of a rival ; but at present he is willing to give his fair friend an acquaintance of his own choosing ; you must remember his uneasiness on Tréville's account. In short, I can discover nothing more in this confusion of sentiments than a great deal of friendship, on a ground-work of inclination, bordered round by passion. If he should chance to be with you, do not tell him all this ; you may give him a hint or two, if you choose, accordingly as you find him disposed.

I have a great desire to read Terence ; nothing could give me greater pleasure than to see the originals, of which the copies have afforded me so much pleasure. My son will translate to me the satire against foolish amours [1] ; he ought to be able to write one himself, or at least to profit by this ; if the situation he is in at present does not correct him, I know not what will. We read books of controversy : one has lately been published [2] in answer to the *Prejudices*, to which I wish M. Arnauld had replied ; but I fancy that he has been forbidden; and it is thought more advisable to leave this book unanswered, though it may do injury to religion, than to permit the publication of another that may serve to justify the Jansenists from

[1] She no doubt alludes here to the well-known description of the extravagance of lovers, which is to be found in Terence's *Eunuch*, scene i, beginning in these words :

In amore haec omnia insunt vitia, etc.

[2] Written by the Protestant Minister Claude, entitled *A Defence of the Reformation against the 'Well-founded Prejudices' of M. Nicole.*

the errors with which they have been reproached ; but more of this another time. I have been promised the coadjutor's speech, but I have not yet had it ; my son and several others speak highly in its praise. But let us talk a little of your health.

Are you not alarmed at the coldness and numbness of your legs ? Is it possible that in the country of warm baths you should suffer your limbs thus to perish, and to have no feeling of them but by attacks of pain ? Are there no fomentations that will recall the vital juices to the parts they have thus deserted ? or do you consider this inconvenience a trifle unworthy your regard ? The bath, you say, has done you no good ; but are you therefore to try no other remedy ? Is it possible that the continuance of such a disagreeable and dangerous disorder can reconcile you to it ? You tell me to have recourse to an opening medicine ; it is only two days since I took one, and I begin to repent it, for I was much better before. I still take the cherry-water, and would to God I could establish an intercourse of health between us ; I could spare you a considerable portion of mine without inconvenience. Good day, my beloved child, my thoughts are wholly taken up with you, with your love, your health, and the pleasure I shall soon have in embracing you, I am but too happy in this hope, and I am determined not to cloud it by any gloomy thoughts or ungrateful forebodings.

My son wished to write to you, to tell you he will translate what you bid him, and will profit by your advice. He has showed me a little work of La Fontaine's ; I know not why I have not sent it to you. It is true, that they who have seen this beautiful *plum-tree*,[1] can with difficulty persuade themselves that it comes directly from the third heaven ; I think they would now have greater difficulty than ever in believing it. It is said

[1] Allusion to the story of the honest fellow who could not answer to his conscience to worship a crucifix made out of the wood of a plum-tree he had formerly walked over. This plum-tree is Madame de Fontanges. The little work in question is to be found in La Fontaine's miscellaneous poems, addressed to this beauty. It begins with this verse:

Charmant objet, digne présent des cieux, etc.

Charming object, a present worthy of the skies.

It is very mediocre both in style and ideas.

the visits are now daily paid for the love of God ; this is a great change. The poor fellow wished to have a little chat with you, but he is so sadly out of spirits to-day that he can scarcely speak a word.

LETTER CLVI

To the Same

The Rocks, Sunday, October 13, 1680.

My son is in a truly pitiable situation ; he is so thin, so shrivelled, so dejected, and his beard is of such a frightful length, that you would not know him again ; in his intervals of ease, however, he plays at ombre and chats ; he loves to be petted, and thinks he begins to recover. It vexes me when I reflect for whom he suffers ! for an ungrateful woman, nay, what is still worse, for a *Sylvia*, for whom he has not, nor ever had, any real love. Madame de Coulanges writes me very humorously that his cure will be a source of public rejoicing. Her letter is very entertaining. She anticipates, as every one does that knows you, no small pleasure in the enjoyment of your society this winter, and in renewing old connexions. As M. de Coulanges is with you, I doubt not that you are very much pleased : now is the time for playing M. de Grignan a trick ; it would be a good idea to put Coulanges in a box or the Abbé Viani's theorbo-case ; for you cannot produce him simply as you would another person. I must confess I was altogether for the journey to Rome : there were a thousand circumstances that rendered it agreeable ; and I had besides, a thousand little reasons of my own, which I could still produce if they were wanted, but it would be like bringing an army into the field when there was no enemy to engage. I am extremely glad Coulanges has followed your advice, which was infinitely preferable to any other ; I should be glad to see the little man again. Madame de Coulanges had no reason on her side to wish him to take this journey, for his company is far from being irksome to her.

What say you now my dear child, of Montgobert's mind, or rather of her heart? Is it not exactly what I pronounced it to be? I was intimately acquainted with it, though it was hid under thorns, briers, and mists, which all proceeded from friendship, attachment, and jealousy: and when you said,

Qu' importe de mon cœur si je fais mon devoir? [1]

I, you know, said just the reverse; I always wished some of those happy conversations to take place which so much contribute to restore drooping friendship and in which every accent, every look, has its effect. I mentioned this to you, but the time was not come; everything must have its time, even to the boiling of an egg; but after all, I am surprised that Montgobert has not informed me of this good news, knowing, as she does, how much I am interested in it. Thus you see we must not always judge by appearances; you imagined there was no stability in her heart, and you have found the contrary. You may possibly find the same, with regard to that of your neighbour [2]; I have observed great affection and sensibility in that quarter. I am sorry you have not yet met with one of those eloquent moments in which you express yourself so well. This was not a friendship formed for saying, "I loved you once, but I love you no longer"; but to be solid and unshaken. The coolness that at present subsists between you and him is so much the more dangerous as it is concealed beneath a smiling exterior, and the mask of civility; in short, there is an appearance of something without any foundation: this is your own description of it, "a perfect cessation of every kind of tie, confidence, and sentiment"; a curious friendship, indeed! A very curious friendship! I shall be apt to say like Marshal de Grammont: "If I make you shake hands, gentlemen, I see no way of preventing you from cutting one another's throat whenever you please." All these things, however, will wear a different aspect when the time comes. I long most impatiently for the day which is to restore you once more to my maternal embrace.

[1] What signifies my heart, if I do my duty?

[2] The person here hinted at by Madame de Sévigné was M. de la Garde, whose barony lay contiguous to that of M. de Grignan.

Madame de Marbœuf is still with me ; we are happy in her company, and she is so in ours ; yet she will leave us, for no other reason that I know of, but because people cannot be contented when they are well off. She has written to M. de Coulanges to inform him of the good fortune of Mademoiselle Descartes, to whom the Duchess de Chaulnes has given a very pretty pension. This young lady is as wise as her uncle and yourself.

LETTER CLVII

To the Same

Paris, Friday, All Saints' Day, 1680.

I have just informed Madame de Coulanges that I am out of countenance at being in Paris at this season of the year *having never been seen at such a feast before* ; if the coadjutor [1] can relish this wretched pun, it is at his service. Madame de Coulanges informs me she has received so entertaining a letter from you that she should never be tired of reading it ; and you have the assurance to write me word, by the very same post, that your style is as flat and insipid as the lady's who wrote to M. de Coulanges in my letter. You deserve to be heartily scolded when you talk in this manner.

If you would have me speak to you without disguise, and agreeably to the dictates of sound reason, M. de Grignan ought to make you set out, without waiting till he has finished the ceremony of receiving M. de Vendôme ; this delay will carry you far into the month of January, the thought of which is insupportable. M. de Vendôme stays at every place ; he will be more than a week at Orleans, he will spend five or six days in hunting with the Archbishop of Lyons ; so you see that staying to receive him, conducting him to Aix, and bringing him back with you again, will take up a great deal of time ; and it will be paying very little attention to your health or

[1] The coadjutor was fond of playing upon words.

safety thus to delay your journey. This is what my anxiety to everything that respects your comfort and welfare prompts me to write to you : I wish this piece of advice may prove as unnecessary, and come as unseasonably as most of those things do that pass between persons at such a distance as we are from each other ; and that, when this letter arrives, you may already have fixed the day of your departure, as your letter expresses. Your apprehension that I should pass the winter in Brittany, found me snug in Paris.

After embracing you most cordially, my dear Count, in spite of your infidelities, I must tell you, that the above is addressed to you ; your affection ought to inspire you with the same anxiety, the same apprehensions, as those which actuate me.

It is said Madame de Schomberg is going to leave us, and take up her residence in the Faubourg St. Germain. It is really very amusing to see the preparations that are made for the observance of the new league of amity between this lady and Madame de la Fayette. The Abbé Têtu maintains that this intimacy will put Madame de Coulanges out of all patience ; and he is still so much her admirer as to be delighted with the idea. Brancas is almost wild about it, and talks of Madame de Schomberg, as if she were still at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. If Madame de Coulanges should avenge herself on them all by contracting a friendship and intimacy with you, it would have the most whimsical effect imaginable : for my part, I shall take great care of what I have already obtained, as a reward for my past services. Corbinelli and I are both of opinion that nothing is wanting in these preparations but friendship itself. Adieu, my dearest child ! it grows late. I have been overwhelmed with visits. You always laugh at my foresight ; but I cannot bear to drive things off to the last moment.

LETTER CLVIII

To the Same

Paris, Friday, November 8, 1680.

I make a very different use of my guests [1] from what you imagine. I am sorry I did not set you right in this particular before I left the Rocks, I am really very well pleased with having them here. I pass almost an hour and a half every evening in conversation with Mademoiselle de Méri, and she seems to be so much at her ease, and to feel so persuaded that she need not hurry herself, that I am sure she is satisfied though she does not say so. It is really an amusing study to observe the different manners of different people. As to the Chevalier, I am delighted with his return from Versailles ; we chatted together two hours last night in Mademoiselle de Méri's apartment ; he cannot yet quit his young master, who continues very ill. The English physician has engaged to the King so positively, even on the forfeiture of his head to cure Monseigneur in four days, both of his fever and vomiting, that, if he should fail, I really believe they would throw him out of the window ; and, on the other hand, should his prediction prove as true in this case, as it has done in all the others he has had the management of, I shall say that a temple ought to be erected to him, as a second Æsculapius. It is a pity that Molière is dead ; he would make an excellent scene of Daquin,[2] who is driven to his wit's end at not being possessed of this panacea ; and the rest of the tribe, who are overwhelmed with despair at the experience, the success and the almost divine prognostications, of this little foreigner. The King will have him make up his medicines in his presence, and trusts the management of the Prince wholly to him. The Dauphiness is already much better ; and yesterday the Count de Grammont saluted Daquin with the following stanza :—

[1] Mademoiselle de Méri and the Chevalier de Grignan were both lodged in the Hôtel de Carnavalet, on the arrival of Madame de Sévigné at Paris.

[2] First physician to the King.

Talbot eſt vainqueur du trépas,
Daquin ne lui reſiſte pas ;
La dauphine eſt convalescente,
Que chacun chante, etc.[1]

Nothing is talked of at Court but this. The Chevalier told me a thousand other things equally amusing, which cannot be written. I assure you, it is no bad thing to be eſtablished in those regions ; it gives a certain familiarity and favourable opportunities, that exiſt nowhere else.

I know nothing of your plans ; but it is plain that M. de Vendôme is in no hurry to get to Provence : he is ſtill at Orleans, amusing himself with ſtag-hunting ; he intends to make some ſtay at Lyons ; and if M. de Grignan muſt be present at the assembly, and you are to wait till he sends you back your carriage, you will find yourself in the middle of January, and how can anyone, who has the leaſt love or regard for you, bear the thoughts of your travelling at that season of the year ? In my opinion, health is to be preferred to every other consideration. We are ſtill under dreadful apprehensions respecting your intended return in May ; a courier only can support such fatigues ; I am certain that you will find it impossible ; and why then write or think of it ? Besides, it would be ruinous, to be at such an expense in furniſhing a house, purchasing clothes, and a thousand other articles, only for a ſtay of three months ; it seems as if you took delight in spoiling the moſt agreeable journey in the world, and the moſt advantageous for your family. If you ask me what I have to do with it, and why I scold you thus ; I shall reply, that I intereſt myself in my own affairs, and that, considering you and yours as a part of them, I cannot but be intereſted in everything that concerns you, and that, whatever injures you, muſt

[1] Daquin no longer can withſtand
Talbot, victorious over death ;
The Princess owns his healing hand ;
Let each one sing with joyful breath, etc.

This is a parody on the chorus in the firſt scene of the fifth act of the opera of *Alceſte*.

likewise injure me. Can you, my dear child, entertain a thought of wasting your substance at Aix, or your health at Grignan, this winter? Indeed these things are ever uppermost with me; and strong and ardent as my desire is to see and embrace you, I would advise you not to come, if you intend to be gone again in an instant; this would be flying in the face of common sense.

We shall see if my son's illness has worked any change in his intentions; I much doubt it, especially in those relating to his place, which seem to have been long and deeply rooted in his mind. All sublunary events are the sport of Providence; I observe its workings and am continually meditating on our state of dependence, and the diversity of our opinions; but the sentiments of the heart are more profound, at least I judge so by my own; the affection which I feel for you, my beloved child, seems to me mixed with my very blood, and blended with the very marrow of my bones; it is a part of my essence; I speak what I feel.

[N.B.—*Madame de Grignan arrived shortly after this letter. Mother and daughter remained together till September*, 1684; *Madame de Sévigné then went to the Rocks.*]

LETTER *CLIX

Madame de Sévigné to M. de Moulceau [1]

Paris, Friday, January 8, 1681.

I should be very sorry, sir, if our correspondence were to end with the temple of Montpellier; and all you say to this

[1] M. de Moulceau was President of the Chamber of Accounts of Montpellier; it appears that Madame de Sévigné, at the time of her journey into Provence, had found him on terms of strict friendship with M. and Madame de Grignan and M. de Vardes and Corbinelli, and that she was so sensible of his worth, and the charms of his mind, as to enter into a correspondence with him. But we remark with astonishment that no mention is made of this interesting man in any of the preceding letters.

effect, in doing the honours of your letters by supposing the assurance of their continuance to contain a threat to me, is so ungenerous that I should be disposed to scold you ; nor would the pretty turn you have given to this guarantee you from my reproaches, were it not that the letter you have written to my son makes me eager to tell you how much it has delighted me. The neatness of the beginning has reminded me of our merry stories, and the beauty of the verses has made me regret that you have not continued them in good earnest. If you have done so, let us share the pleasure of reading them : the two Latin verses you explain are very just ; in short, we esteem your verse, your prose, and all your productions. My son is still your adorer ; my daughter admires and esteems you in the highest degree ; I presume you know my own sentiments for you, and that you see plainly, there is not a family in the world who so justly appreciates your merit. You do the same in regard to M. de Carcassonne, by praising him as you do. The poor Chevalier has been here for these six weeks, laid up with the rheumatism ; he receives visits from persons almost as lame as himself ; those who are left-handed, show at least that their taste is right. You have returned M. de Noailles to us in a very ill state of health. He has so violent a diarrhœa, that it seems as if he had eaten to his own share all he has expended at Montpellier ; in short, he has been obliged to resign the staff, the staff that was the object of his love, the staff he went so far to assume, the staff which was the reward of all his other services : it is natural to suppose that he must be very ill, when he gives it himself to M. de Luxembourg. You say much in his favour, when you speak of the distinction and expansion of heart he showed you : I wish his generosity had gone so far as to have induced him to return our mortified friend's visit.[1]

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[1] Anne Jules, Duke de Noailles, had been nominated to the command in Languedoc, of which the Duke de Maine, then too young to take it upon himself, had just been appointed Governor. Preparations were making for the destruction of Calvinism. In conjunction with the intendant d'Aguesseau, father of the celebrated Chancellor, Noailles endeavoured for a long time to engage the Court to employ mild measures ; and even in the execution of the most rigorous, he at first showed some humanity ; but he afterwards became one of the most violent perse-

Have I not heard you say that we ought to respect the unfortunate? it cannot be doubted that this has increased the mortification. I pity him for having suffered this feeling to take possession of him, and to have surmounted even his Christian philosophy; but I pity him still more if your heart be yet closed against him: a friend like you would be a true consolation in all his afflictions. Our *friend* (Corbinelli) is entirely occupied here with his affairs; he does wonders; he is become the best lawyer in Paris; and this qualification came to him unexpectedly along with his peruke and brandenbourg; so that we should much sooner have taken him for a captain of cavalry than a man of business. It is thus the exterior often deceives us. If M. de Vardes had not thrown him into this employment, his gratitude and inclination would lead him straight to you; his heart is still perfect in all the moral virtues: they will become Christian virtues when it shall please Providence, whom we still adore, and who seems to treat you well, by the sentiments it inspires you with. Adieu, my dear sir; we should have many things to say to each other if we met: who knows that some day or other we may not? Our friend writes to you separately; so much the worse for him: he will not know that I have the pleasure of assuring you here of my sincere and faithful friendship.

LETTER *CLX

To the Same

Paris, April 17, 1682.

If you are alarmed at the appearance of my neglect, be assured, sir, it is a false alarm, and that appearances are deceitful; you do not suffer yourself to be forgotten: Rochecourbière,

cutors, and his dispatches, concerted with Louvois, did not fail to excite the King to rigours of which he too late repented.

It appears that he thought he could not with propriety, in the situation he held, return the visit of M. de Vardes, then an exile, and whom Madame de Sévigné designates by the title of the mortified friend.

Livri, and the days in which we have seen you, are faithful guarantees of what I say ; and I am certain you believe it, and that being so well informed on every other subject, Christian humility does not prevent you from knowing your own worth. It is a truth, therefore ; you cannot be forgotten. Our *friend* and I said a thousand times, Let us write to this poor *reprobate* ; but by continually delaying it, we have embarrassed ourselves by our miserable security. It seems to me as if Montpellier has given a great deal to the jubilee. You know what a horror Corbinelli has of this sort of parade, which he calls hypocrisy. I do not know exactly how he has acted upon the occasion, and I have not dared question him ; but considering the extreme respect he has for this holy mystery, and how rigorously he enters into the preparations for it, of which he will not abate a single iota, I have long been tempted to say to him, *basta la meta* (the half is sufficient) ; for, in fact, if all the faithful were to follow his ideas upon the subject, the ceremonials of religion would be done away. This is the inspiration of God and whether it be light or dereliction, some great change must happen to alter his opinions. M. de Vardes has put the same question to him that you put to me on his jubilee : he has answered very honestly and has given him a *probet autem semetipsum homo*, which may occasion great reflexions. This is all I can tell you : you know and love the soul, for indeed the more his heart is known, the more it must be admired. I perceive his departure approach, and I perceive it with sorrow ; but what may not Providence reserve for M. de Vardes ? M. de Bussy is recalled after an exile of eighteen years ; he has seen the King, who received him most graciously : these are times of justice and clemency ; we not only do what is well, but what is perfectly well : I doubt not, therefore, that this poor exile's turn will come, and every one else believes it so firmly, that if anything can do him injury, it is this general report. You tell me the most agreeable truth I can hear, in assuring me the young people will bring from Languedoc all the politeness which failed them here [1] : they appear to me like the Germans who are

[1] This refers to the daughter and son-in-law of M. de Vardes (M. and Madame de Rohan), who had spent six months with him at Montpellier.

sent to Angers to learn the language ; they were Germans in manners, and if they had not learned them out of Court, would seem to conduct themselves ridiculously : it is easy to comprehend that, having had so good a master as M. de Vardes for six months, they must have profited more than they had done during their whole life. This return leaves a void which our *friend* will fill very agreeably ; you will inform us of the success of this economical colic, to which paternal affection must become the midwife. If you understand this period, well and good ; if it appears obscure to you, place it to the account of the rodomontade you have taught us. The zeal of the Chevalier de Grignan is still as fervent as ever upon a certain subject, and he only waits opportunities to put it in practice : the objections I made you do not originate with him, and I answered for him readily : in short, he is as you left him. Some people would lose a great deal, if they were subject to change. Not so with regard to my daughter's health ; she is much better than when you left us ; her face would remind you of the face you have seen at Grignan. M. de Grignan, his daughters, his son, and our good Abbé are all as well as can be wished. Mademoiselle de Grignan's devotion is increased, and will increase still, for she draws from an inexhaustible source. The devout friendship of Madame de Verneuil for me is nearly in the same style of magnificence : she displays the same perseverance we have mutually shown for each other for upwards of thirty years. The liberty of speaking thus of a Princess, and the antiquity of the date, oblige me to conclude this article. I bid you therefore adieu, my dear sir, after having entreated you not to praise the King so much on the last action you have informed us of, as to make you forget all the others ; let us always celebrate his great name both by sea and land, and let us admire him upon every occasion. The whole house of Carnavalet loves, esteems, and embraces you. I kiss the hands of your lady, and your amiable daughter. Tell us upon what terms you are with our friend : time changes things so oddly, that I always want to be informed of his operations, convinced that six months are sufficient for him to make reconciliations or quarrels

LETTER *CLXI

To the Same

Paris, May 26, 1682.

Were you not very much surprised, sir, to see M. de Vardes slip through your fingers, whom you had held so firmly for nineteen years? This is the time Providence had marked out for him; in reality, he was no longer thought of, he appeared forgotten and sacrificed to example. The King, who reflects and arranges everything in his head, declared one morning, that M. de Vardes would be at Court in two or three days: he said he had written to him by the post, that he wished to surprise him, and that for more than six months no one had mentioned his name to him. His Majesty was gratified; he wished to create surprise, and every one was surprised: never did intelligence make so great an impression, nor so great a noise, as this. In short, he arrived on Saturday morning with a head singular in its kind, and an old *justaucorps à brevet*,[1] such as was worn in the year 1663. He set one knee to the ground in the King's chamber, M. de Chateauneuf, being the only person present. The King told him that while his heart had been wounded, he had not recalled him, but that he now recalled him with a whole heart, and that he was glad to see him. M. de Vardes made an admirable reply, with an air of being deeply affected, and the gift of tears, which God has given him, produced no ill effect upon this occasion. After this first interview the King caused the Dauphin to be called, and presented him to him as a young courtier. M. de Vardes recognized and saluted him: the King said to him, laughing: "Vardes this is a blunder, you know that no one is saluted in my presence." M. de Vardes replied in the same tone: "Sire, I have forgotten everything: your Majesty must pardon

[1] This was a blue great coat, embroidered with gold and silver, which distinguished the principal courtiers; an especial permission was necessary to wear it. The fashion had passed when Vardes returned to Court.

even thirty blunders." "Well, I will," said the King, "stop at the twenty-ninth." The King afterwards laughed at his coat. M. de Vardes said: "Sire, when a man is so wretched as to be banished from your presence, he is not only unfortunate, but he becomes ridiculous." All this was said in a tone of perfect freedom and playfulness. The courtiers performed wonders. He came one day to Paris, and called upon me; I was just gone out to call upon him, but he found my son and daughter at home, and in the evening I found him at his own house: it was a joyful meeting: I mentioned our friend to him. "What, madam! my master! my intimate friend! the man in the world to whom I owe the greatest obligations! can you doubt that I love him with my whole heart?" This pleased me highly. He resides with his daughter at Versailles. The Court goes to-day; I suppose he will return, to catch the King again at Auxerre, for it appears to all his friends that he ought to take this journey; in which he will certainly pay his court well, by bestowing the most natural praises on three little things, the troops, the fortifications, and his Majesty's conquests. Perhaps our *friend* will tell you all this, and my letter will be only a miserable echo; but at any rate I have entered into the minutiae, because I should like, on such an occasion, to be written to in the same style, and I judge you, my dear sir, by myself; I have often been deceived by others, but never by you. It is said that your worthy and generous friend, M. de Noailles, has rendered very important services to M. de Vardes; he is so generous that it is impossible to doubt this. M. de Calvisson is arrived; this must either break off, or conclude, our marriage. In reality, I am weary of this tedious affair, I am not in a humour to talk of anything but M. de Vardes; M. de Vardes for ever: he is the Gospel of the day.

LETTER *CLXII

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

Paris, December 18, 1683.

At length, after so much difficulty, I shall succeed in marrying my poor boy. I request you to send me your letter of attorney for signing the marriage-articles. I enclose two letters upon the subject to my aunt de Toulongeon, and my great-cousin. We should never despair of our good fortune. I thought my son's situation quite hopeless, after so many storms and shipwrecks, without employments, and out of the way of fortune; and while I was indulging these melancholy reflections, Providence destined, or had destined, us to so advantageous a marriage that I could not have wished for a better alliance, even at the time when my son had the greatest reason to expect it. It is thus we grope in the dark, not knowing our way, taking good for evil, and evil for good, in entire ignorance. Could you have supposed also, that Father Bourdaloüe would have delivered the most beautiful funeral oration it is possible to conceive, six days ago, to the Jesuits, in compliance with the last will of the President Perrault? Never has an action been admired with greater justice than this. He has taken the Prince [1] in the most favourable points of view; and as his return to religion has produced a powerful effect for the Catholics, this branch of the subject, treated by a Bourdaloüe, formed the most beautiful and Christian panegyric that was ever pronounced.

[1] This Prince was Henry II de Bourbon-Condé, the son of a great man, and the father of a great man, without anything extraordinary in himself; it was he who took his wife to the Netherlands, to secure her from the too pressing gallantries of Henry IV; a precaution which she did not take in very good part. He was as avaricious as he was disagreeable. He died in 1646. President Perrault had long managed the affairs of the house of Condé. He was succeeded by Gourville.

LETTER CLXIII

Madame de Sévigné to the Marquis de Sévigné, her son

Paris, August 5, 1684.

While I am expecting your letters, I must relate to you a very amusing little history. You remember how much you regretted Mademoiselle de . . ., and how unfortunate you thought yourself in having missed her for a wife : "Your best friends had all conspired against your happiness ; Madame de Lavardin and Madame de la Fayette had done you irreparable injury ! A young lady of noble birth, great beauty, and ample fortune, was lost to you ; surely a man must be doomed never to marry, and to die like a beggar, to let such an opportunity escape him, when it was in his own power ! The Marquis de . . . was not such a fool ; he has made his fortune, and is settled. You must certainly have been born under an unlucky planet, to miss such a match ! Only observe her conduct ; she is a saint ; an example to all married women." You remember all this, I suppose, my dear son, and that till you married Mademoiselle de Mauron, you were ready to hang yourself ; you could not have done better than you have done ; but now for the sequel.

All those amiable qualities of her youth, which made Madame de la Fayette say she would not have her for a daughter-in-law if she could bring millions to her son, were happily directed to the service of religion. God was her lover, the only object of her affection, all her desires centred in this single passion ; but as everything was in extremes with her, her poor head could not bear the excess of zeal and fervent devotion with which it was filled ; and, to satisfy the overflowings of her Magdalen heart, she resolved to profit by good examples, by reading the lives of the Holy Fathers of the Desert, and of female penitents ; she wished to become herself the heroine of such admirable histories ; and, full of this idea, left her

house and family about a fortnight ago, and, taking with her only five or six piſtoles, and a little foot-boy, set out at four o'clock in the morning, and, taking a poſt-chaise at the skirts of the town, drove to Rouen, fatigued and covered with mud : when she got there, she bargained for a passage in a ship bound for the Indies : it was there, it seems, God had called her ; it was there she was to lead a life of penitence and humiliation : it was there the map had pointed out to her an abode, which invited her to pass the reſt of her days in sackcloth and ashes ; it was there the Abbé Zosimus [1] was to visit her, and adminiſter to her the laſt holy rites before she expired. Satisfied with this resolution, and convinced that Heaven inspired her with it, she discharged her foot-boy, and sent him home to his own country while she waited, with great impatience, the departure of the ship ; her good angel consoled her for the delay ; she piously forgot husband, daughter, father, and relations, exclaiming,

Ça ! courage, mon cœur, point de foiblesse humaine.[2]

And now the moment arrived in which her prayers are heard ; the happy moment that was to separate her for ever from her native land ; she follows the law of the gospel ; she leaves all to follow Chriſt.

In the meantime, however, her family missed her, and finding she did not return to dinner, sent to all the churches in the neighbourhood ; she was not there : they supposed she would return at night ; no tidings were heard of her : they now begin to be uneasy, the servants are all queſtioned, they can give no account of her, further than that she had taken her foot-boy with her : "she muſt certainly be at her country house" ; no. "Where can she possibly be ?" A messenger is dispatched to the curé of St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas ; the curé says he has not had the direction of her conscience for a considerable time ; for, being a simple, honeſt man, and having observed her full of ſtrange chimerical ideas of religion, he would have nothing to do with her. Every one was now at a loss what to think ; two,

[1] A famous hermit of the sixth century, who came on the eve of every Good Friday to give the sacrament to St. Mary the Egyptian, in a desert cave on the banks of the River Jordan. See the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

[2] Courage, my heart ! Disdain all human weakness.

three, four days, a week passed, still no news of her : at length her friends thought of sending to some of the seaports, and by mere accident found her at Rouen, on the point of setting out for Dieppe, and from thence to the other extremity of the globe. They secure her and bring her back, a little disconcerted at being disappointed of her journey :—

J'allois, j'étois, l'amour a sur moi tant d'empire.[1]

A lady to whom she had imparted her design revealed the whole to her family, who, in despair at her folly, would fain have concealed it from her husband, who happened to be absent from Paris at that time, and who would have been better pleased at an exploit of gallantry in his amiable consort, than such a ridiculous expedition as this. The husband's mother came to Madame de Lavardin and, bathed in tears, related the whole story, while the latter could scarcely refrain from laughing in her face ; and the next time she saw my daughter asked her if she could forgive her for having been the instrument of preventing her brother from marrying this pretty creature. Madame de la Fayette was also, in her turn, informed of this tragical story, and repeated it to me with great glee. She desires me to ask you if you are still angry with her ; she maintains that no one can ever repent he did not marry a mad woman.

We dare not mention a syllable of this to Mademoiselle de Grignan, her friend, who, for some time past has been ruminating upon a pilgrimage, and as a preparative has lately observed a profound silence towards us all. What think you of this curious narration ? Has it tired you ? Are you satisfied now ? Adieu, my son. Marshal de Schomberg is marching to Germany at the head of twenty-five thousand men, to hasten the Emperor's signing.[2] The gazette will inform you of the rest. Adieu.

[1] I went, I came, impelled by mighty love.

[2] This relates to the truce which was on the point of being concluded at Ratisbon, and was published at Paris on the 5th of October following.



MME. DE GRIGNAN
by Pierre Mignard

[*face p. 108*

LETTER CLXIV

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan [1]

Etampes, Wednesday, September 13, 1684.

You will easily believe, my dearest child, that in spite of all your excellent counsels I found myself on quitting you in the midst of a thousand swords that wound me which ever way I turn. I dared not think ; I dared not speak ; my feelings were so painfully alive that my situation was almost insupportable. I have strictly adhered to the regimen you prescribed me ; in short, I do as well as I can. I am in good health, I eat, drink, and sleep well ; I have nursed the *worthy*. In short, I am at Etampes.

I caused the reasons for this journey to be often repeated to me, and found them so cogent that I was obliged to own its necessity, and to form my resolution. But as the grief of quitting you had, in some degree, effaced them, I still require their aid, in order to bear your absence with tranquillity ; I am still far from this point ; I am agitated with an incessant desire of beholding you : do not forget what you said to me on that subject.

I am delighted with the idea of your being at Versailles ; the diversity of objects there must have contributed to calm your mind, more than those of Chartres and Etampes have been able to calm mine. I earnestly hope your journey will prove successful. How can anyone refuse you what you ask ? I recommend your health to your care ; it is a great consolation to me to have left you with such charming round cheeks ; preserve them for my sake. But I dare not dwell upon any subject, everything destroys me ; is it not strange that a thinking being should not dare to think ? I am very much obliged to the lovely eyes of Mademoiselle d'Alerac for the tears [2] they

[1] Madame de Grignan remained at Paris while her mother was in Brittany.

[2] Frances Julia Adhémar de Grignan, youngest daughter of the Count de Grignan, by Angelique-Claire d'Angennes, his former wife.

shed on my account ; but what thanks can repay you, my beloved child, for so much affection, and so much grief ? Ah ! I must pass over this subject as quickly as possible ; believe then, in one word, that my heart is devoted to you, that everything yields place to you therein, and leaves you unrivalled mistress of its affections.

LETTER CLXV

To the Same

The Rocks, Friday, December 15, 1684.

Little Beaulieu is on the point of setting out to play the man of consequence this winter at Versailles ; happy creature ! In six days he will see you ; this idea awakens all my sorrows, and cuts me to the heart. He brings you the three deeds you have already seen, and which are exactly the same as the copy M. d'Ormesson sent me. If you wish to see them completely signed and sealed by my son you have only to open the packet that contains them, seal it up again, and give it to Beaulieu, together with my letters, which he will take care to deliver according to their directions. Your brother executed these deeds very readily ; for he is not infected with the manners of this country. He was highly pleased to have in his possession again the note for 80,000 francs, which was a debt due from me to the *worthy*, and for which my son had made himself responsible for your security. He always intended to pay it ; however, he was not a little pleased that the Abbé gave him up his note, and that he has made you a present of another paper, of which Sévigné had not the least knowledge, though it related to part of his own fortune ; but, for that very reason, you will say, he was the less sensible of the loss. He has thanked the good Abbé with the same feeling we thank a kind father who has put the finishing stroke to his favours by settling us happily in marriage. Had it not been for this seasonable assistance your brother would absolutely have been a bankrupt. The spirits

are calmed by dint of conversing familiarly, and making reason to be heard. In short, the worst is past, and things have turned out very happily both for you and for the repose of my life ; it even extends beyond me, and when I die I shall leave my children and my dearest friends at peace with each other. This was the darling object I had in view, and it is with joy I see that I have not lost my labour.

I send you, my child, the most precious thing in my possession, which is half a bottle of balsam (*baume tranquille*). I can never have it filled again, as the Capuchins have no more. It is by the help of this balsam that they cured the little woman of her nephritic complaints. They desire you to put ten or twelve drops of it into the same quantity of spirits of urine made pretty warm, and rub it well into your side, by which means it will penetrate to the seat of the disorder ; they assert that it is sovereign remedy in these cases, as also for all complaints of the chest. I heartily wish you had no occasion to make use of it ; but as that is too great a happiness to be expected, I conjure you to try it. Your health often occasions me many uneasy moments ; I am impatient to know how the colic, which is not a colic, has passed off. Talk to me of yourself as often as you can, but say nothing of New Year's gifts ; it is very well when we are together, and can laugh. But I could now weep plentifully if I chose to give way to my feelings, that we are separated.

LETTER CLXVI

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 7, 1685.

You cannot do better than divert your melancholy at Versailles, though it would be still better to have no melancholy to divert. I am afraid the sympathetic powder has no effect on old disorders, for it has only cured the least troublesome of my little wounds. I at present apply the black ointment, which is an admirable remedy ; and I am so near being cured, that

you ought no longer to trouble your head about me, otherwise than to love me, and share with me in the pleasing hope with which I am now animated. I have not a single symptom of fever. I am like another person ; I eat moderately ; when it is fine I walk out, for I am advised to use my legs as there is no inflammation. I write, read, and work, and receive your letters with my usual eagerness and raptures. This is the real state of affairs with me ; and you may rest assured that I dislike too much to be deceived with regard to you, to practise any deception with you myself.

I am at present in my room, the sun shines upon me, and I will not swear that I shall not take a walk upon our terrace. Calm your imagination, then, my dear Countess, and remove the veil of apprehension that prevents you from beholding me as I really am. Think no more of the poor weeping woman with the *pious Æneas* at her feet ; it is all false, I assure you. I intend, however, to spare my legs as much as possible, because when once they are inflamed they are not very soon appeased again. The other day I tried a dose of Friar Ange's purgative infusion, and found myself the better for it ; but, after all, I see no reason for disturbing good health, and slight medicines, upon the whole, do more harm than good.

I shall now conclude, leaving you in the midst of the glorious bustle in which I fancy you to be engaged ; assured that even in this situation you do not think of me with less affection than when alone in your apartment. Of what other person can the same be said ? But who, on the other hand, can feel more sensibly than I do the charms of this affection ?

LETTER CLXVII

To the Same

The Rocks, Sunday, February 27, 1685.

Ah, my child ! Was ever anything so ill-timed as the death of the King of England,[1] just at the eve of a masquerade ?

[1] Charles II, who died 16th February, 1685.

My poor little Marquis [1] is very unfortunate to have such an unexpected event thrown in the way of his pleasure. I know nothing that can comfort him for this disappointment but the universal encomiums that have been given to his charming dress, and the hope that the masquerade is only put off for a time.

My dear child, I make you my compliments of condolence on these great occurrences, and expect yours in return upon my mistaken ideas ; for I was at the masquerade, the opera, and the ball, snug in a corner, contemplating you with admiration ; in short, I was in as great an agitation as you may suppose your poor mother to experience on such an occasion—and, after all, there was no entertainment of any kind.

I enter into your sentiments, my beautiful dear, better than anyone. Yes, yes, I can very well conceive that we are transfused into our children, and, as you say, feel more keenly for them than for ourselves. I have sufficiently experienced these emotions, which are not without their pleasure when the object is deserving of them, and of the admiration of every one besides. Your son pleases extremely ; there is something inexpressibly smart and agreeable in his countenance. The eye does not pass lightly over him as over others in general, but rests attentively. Madame de la Fayette tells me she has written to Madame de Montespan that she had engaged her honour that you and your son would have reason to be satisfied with her. I know no one who would be more happy to serve you than Madame de la Fayette.

I am not at all surprised that you should wish to go to Livri during this fine weather ; for myself, I am all the early part of the day in these beautiful walks but never dare encounter the cold of the evening. I wear your handsome brandenbourg, which is quite a full dress ; my leg is well, and I walk as well as any other person. Be not, therefore, uneasy that I use it, for I should absolutely die if I were confined to the house in such fine weather. I have written to my son that I have nothing more to do with him, that I can walk as well as he, and bid him

[1] Louis-Provence, Marquis de Grignan, Madame de Sévigné's grandson.

mind his own business ; he and his wife are still enjoying the pleasures of Rennes from whence they are not to return till Shrove Sunday. I am not sorry for this, as I have company enough.

The Princess frequently comes to partake of my sunshine ; she has given the good Abbé a divine medicine, which has perfectly cured him of the headache and fainting fits, which alarmed me dreadfully. The Princess is certainly an Æsculapius in her way ; I am serious, for the Capuchins themselves allow that her dispensary affords some of the most rare and valuable drugs in the universe, and she has performed an infinite number of cures.

The *worthy* wishes he could do the honours of the house for you at Livri ; for if you intend to keep your Lent there, you will have but indifferent cheer : I hope you do not think of living upon a Lent diet, with that pain in your side. I think you have already tried your disorder pretty well by the many journeys you have taken to Versailles : as to living low I think it would be destruction to you, for you require something to keep up your strength ; and yet I receive daily accounts how well you look ; Madame de Vins writes me word that you are quite another person to what I left you. You say time respects you for my sake : it is excellent of you to talk of time ! But is it not extraordinary that we have not yet had a word together on the death of the King of England ? He was by no means an old man, and he was a monarch ; this shows that death spares no one. It will be a great happiness if he was a Catholic in his heart, and died in the faith of our holy religion. England appears to me a theatre that is about to furnish some very extraordinary scenes : the Prince of Orange, the Duke of Monmouth, an infinite number of Lutherans, and a confirmed aversion to all Catholics ; but time will discover in what way Providence will direct the performances, after this tragical event [1] ; however, it seems it will not put a stop to the

[1] Charles II was sixty-five years of age, and had reigned about twenty-five years reckoning from the restoration of the Stuarts. He received the sacraments agreeably to the rites of the Church of Rome, but more, it is said, in compliance with the entreaties of his brother, than the dictates of his conscience. He had some good

diversions at Versailles, since I find you are to return there on Monday. You say a thousand kind things of the concern it would give you to leave me behind at Paris, if I were there ; but as this, to my great regret, is not the case, make the most of this opportunity, follow the Court : no one is formed to make better figure there, and I think everything seems to tend towards the completion of your wishes. Mine, though made at such a distance, are not less ardent and sincere, than if I were with you. I feel, though less delicately, the truth of a remark you made to me one day, and which I then laughed at ; that you were so much mistress of my imagination and my heart that I had you always present with me : this is very true, my child, but I must own I had rather enjoy a little more reality.

Before I conclude, my dear child, I must tell you this. You have an idea that your brother is a clever fellow, that he is a connoisseur in cookery, and knows how to order an entertainment in the best manner : so far from it, he knows nothing of the matter ; his man, Larméchin, still less, and the cook least of all ; indeed, it is not to be wondered at, if one who was a tolerable cook should be entirely spoiled here : in short, I, whom you despise so much, am the eagle of this house, and no one presumes to pass his judgment upon any dish till my countenance has been consulted. The ambition of letting you know that I reign over a tribe of ignorant people has extorted this silly account from me.

private qualities. But, as a Prince, his character, says the impartial Hume, was " dangerous to his subjects, and dishonourable to himself." To rid himself of his Parliament he had placed himself in a state of disgraceful dependence on Louis XIV. It has been said of him that he never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one. Judging by the following anecdote he carried farther even than policy required, the practice of dissimulation, which would be, as it is declared, the necessary virtue of kings, if it be true that weakness and indolence are their natural vices. It is said that Charles II, having reproached his minister Shaftesbury with being " the greatest knave in the three kingdoms ", he replied " Apparently your Majesty only includes subjects ".

Madame de Sévigné speaks of the state of England in the character of a well-informed person. The rebellion of Monmouth and his tragical end in the same year and James II dethroned and driven out of the kingdom three years afterwards by his son in-law, justified but too well her predictions.

LETTER CLXVIII

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 13, 1685.

You use me ill, if you think I grudged the postage for the book of carousals: never did I pay anything with greater alacrity; it has proved a feast to us ever since we have had it. I am certain that if I had been in Paris I should only have read it superficially; for in that place one occupation continually excludes another; it is like the ocean, where wave succeeds to wave; the comparison is just. Here we are in a lake; we can enjoy the carousal without fatigue; but we have been a little puzzled with respect to the devices. That of a dog who gnaws a bone for want of something better to eat, quite confounds us. We shall certainly be the occasion of your reading this book. I am highly delighted with the race, in which M. de Luxembourg's two hams were the prize. The Abbé could not contain himself when we came to this place, and wished he had been one of the Paladins. Was the Duke de Bourbon looking very handsome? Tell me seriously what sort of figure he made; did he in shape and air at all resemble our Marquis?[1] Ah! I fear not. I am quite concerned for him; it is a terrible mortification, amidst so much greatness and splendour to be deficient in shape. I hear his wedding is to be celebrated with great magnificence, and that the most noble of the Chevaliers are to be present. I shall tell Madame de la Fayette what you say of hers; she will be delighted. She complains affectionately that she scarcely ever sees you. She says you appear everywhere as handsome as an angel and always the same; I never mention again a syllable of what you tell me, except to yourself, so that there is no danger of its coming round. Madame de la Troche informs me that Madame de Moreuil was taken by

[1] All this is irony. The Duke de Bourbon was very diminutive and very ugly, but he had a great deal of wit. Mademoiselle de Nantes whom he married was perfectly amiable and graceful, though a little lame.

the Dauphiness into her carriage on Wednesday last, and that this is thought an earnest of her being appointed Lady of Honour to the Duchess de Bourbon, because the King said he would have the person appointed to that post to accompany her in the carriage without anyone else ; but I think there was no occasion for so much hurry. I wish she may have the appointment ; you know I gave her my vote from the beginning.

My vapours seemed inclined to pay me a visit the other day, and I took eight drops of essence of urine ; but, contrary to custom, it prevented me from sleeping the whole night ; it produced, however, the intended effect, and my esteem is greater than ever. But I should be ungrateful to complain of the vapours, for they never once attacked me during the disease in my leg ; indeed, it would have been very ungenerous of them to have taken that advantage. Speaking of my leg, I will inform you how matters stand with it : for some time there was no wound to be perceived, but the place was so hard, and so many humours were settled round it, that the good fathers thought it necessary to disperse them slowly, by poultices of certain herbs, which were removed twice a day, and then buried, and by degrees as they rotted—you may laugh if you please—the pores opened and the part became supple, till, by a mild and almost insensible perspiration, this leg, which had been so imperfectly healed before, is absolutely well. I hope you will tell all this to the surgeons, who, I suppose, will laugh heartily, too ; but I do not care for that.

Do you wish to know where I was yesterday ? I was at the *Place Madame*, where I took two or three turns at mall with the players. Ah, my dear Count ! I always think of you, and how gracefully you strike the ball ! I wish you had as fine a place for this amusement at Grignan as we have here. I intend presently to pay a visit to Pilois ; he is making a delightful green slope, in our long walk, from the end of it towards the road. I hope, my dear child, after this you will not accuse me of being reserved, of concealing the truth from you, or neglecting to inform you of any circumstance.

Our Capuchins are faithful to their three vows : their journey into Egypt, where they saw so many women like Eve, has

disgusted them for the rest of their days. In short, their greatest enemies can find no fault with their conduct ; and this, hated as they are, is passing a high encomium upon them : they have restored a woman to life who was considered as dead.

A word or two of the Duke de Chaulnes : he informs me that the States are at Dinan, and that he purposes to open the assembly on the first of August, that he may have time to come and take me away from hence about the beginning of September ; and then he adds a thousand drolleries about you : "That he has at length brought you to the point he desired ; that you begin to coquet with him, and that in a short time he expects —." In short, he delights me highly with his raillery ; and, to say the truth, I have a great regard both for him and the Duchess, who, in her letters, tells me a hundred little secrets. I cannot conceive how they can be hated, envied, and tormented as they are. I am very glad, however, that you are insensibly become friendly towards them. Had the States been at Brieux, it would have been dreadfully mortifying. It remains now to see who will be appointed commissary ; this will be another disagreeable circumstance to them. If you are upon terms of confidence with them they have a great many things to tell you ; nothing can equal the trouble they have experienced for some time past.

Observe, my dear child, what fashions prevail among the gentlemen this summer ; I shall desire you to send me something handsome for your brother, who wants a suit to receive our governor in ; he wishes it to be smartly made, with cuffs as they are worn, and suitable trimmings. At the same time I wish you would consult the Duchess de Chaulnes about a summer dress for myself to appear in at Rennes ; for, as to the States, I shall beg to be excused from waiting on them. From Rennes I shall return hither, to prepare for the high festival of seeing and embracing you again : Madame de Chaulnes will readily agree to this. I have a dress of brown taffety trimmed round the cuffs and the bottom with silver fringe ; but this, I fancy, is now out of fashion, and I do not wish to appear singular or ridiculous at such a magnificent place as Rennes. I should like to be dressed according to your taste ;

but do not lose sight of economy, nor the gravity which becomes my age : you will be the best judge when these things will be wanted, as you will know the time when the Duke and Duchess set out ; and you may be sure I shall be among the foremost to welcome them to Rennes. I really blush at the ingratitude they have met with from the people of this country, whom I should be sorry in this respect to resemble.

We hear—this is very much to the purpose you will say—that the Minims [1] of your promise have dedicated a treatise to the King, in which they compare him to God, but in such a way as to make God hold only the second place. This curious piece was showed to the Bishop of Meaux, who spoke of it to the King, telling His Majesty that it ought not to be allowed ; upon which the King, who was of the same opinion, ordered it to be sent to the Sorbonne for their revisal ; and the Sorbonne have decreed that it should be suppressed : *too much is too much.* I could never have suspected the Minims of running into such blameable extremes ! I love to send you news of Paris and Versailles ! You know nothing !

You seem to have a romantic regard for the Princes de Conti [2]; for my part, I cannot help blaming them for quitting such a father-in-law, and not trusting to him to show them enough of war. God knows, they would not have wanted opportunities in the station they are in ; no one doubted their courage, and what need had they, therefore, to set up for adventurers and knights errant ? Their cousins of Condé did not want opportunities of signalizing themselves, nor would they. However, *con questo* (with this), I conclude, my dear child, devouring in imagination the month of September, which is not far off.

[1] An order of Friars.

[2] The Princes de Conti and Roche-sur-Yon were gone to serve in the wars in Hungary, where they were present at the battle of Gran, and performed prodigies of valour.

LETTER CLXIX

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, August 11, 1685.

You see, my dear, that we are now come to reckon by days only, not by months ! Not even by weeks ! But, alas ! what you say is very true ; there could not be a more cruel damp to our pleasure than the thought that we might be obliged to part again almost as soon as we met : this is a painful idea ; it occurs to me but too often ; day or night I am not free from it : it came in my head the last time I was writing to you, and I could not forbear saying to myself, surely this evil ought to be sufficient to secure me from the danger of experiencing a greater ; but I dare not dwell upon this melancholy reflection and shall now divert it by the thought, that I am soon to see you at Baville. I shall not be at all ashamed of my equipage ; my children have very elegant ones, and I have had the same ; but now the times are altered : I have only two horses of my own, and shall hire four others from the postmaster of Mans ; and in that manner I shall make my entrance into Paris without the least concern. You will find my leg in a state of perfection, which will make you love Charlotte all your life ; she has fancied you from hence more beautiful than the day, and this idea has given her an extreme desire to restore this leg to you, worthy of your admiration, when you know from what a situation it has been extricated. All this is past, and so is the visit of little Coulanges : he set out on Monday morning with your brother. I accompanied them as far as the gate that leads to Vitré : there we stopped to wait the arrival of your letters from Paris, which came as expected, and were read with the usual pleasure. As you only mentioned that M. d'Ormesson's wife was at the point of death, I have not dared to write to him ; but as soon as you let me know she is buried I will venture to send him a line or two by way of condolence and comfort. But, indeed, considering the state she was in, what could be

more desirable for herself and her family than her death ? Ah, my dear child, how humiliating it is to be obliged to drag about the lees of life and understanding ! How much preferable would it be, could we have our wish, to leave behind us a remembrance worthy of being preserved, rather than spoil and disfigure it by the infirmities and weakness of old age ! I should like to be an inhabitant of that country where they kill their parents out of kindness, when they become old and helpless, if such a practice could be reconciled to Christianity.

Our gentlemen sung *Gaudeamus* on Monday evening at Marbœuf's. Your brother is not quite recovered of his slight disorder. I have had some delightful conversations with Coulanges on the subject he is so much at a loss to comprehend ; scenes have passed between us not inferior to some of Molière's. When do you expect *Saint Grignan* ?

LETTER *CLXX

To the President de Moulceau

Paris, December 15, 1686.

I wrote you a long letter, sir, more than a month ago, full of friendship, secrets, and confidence. I know not what became of it ; it lost its way, perhaps, in seeking for you at the States, since you have not answered it ; but this will not prevent me from telling you a melancholy and at the same time a pleasing piece of intelligence ; the death of the Prince, which happened the day before yesterday, the 11th instant, at a quarter after seven in the evening ; and the return of the Prince de Conti to Court, through the kindness of the Prince, who asked this favour of the King in his last moments ; the King immediately granted it, and the Prince had this consolation on his death-bed, but never was joy drowned in so many tears. The Prince de Conti is inconsolable at the loss he has sustained ; it could not be greater, particularly as he passed the whole time of his disgrace at Chantilly, where he made an admirable use of the

understanding and abilities of the Prince, and drew from the fountain-head all that was to be acquired from so great a master, by whom he was tenderly beloved. The Prince flew, with a speed that has cost him his life, from Chantilly to Fontainebleau, when Madame de Bourbon was seized with the smallpox, in order to prevent the Duke, who had not had the disorder, from nursing her and being with her ; for the Duchess, who has always nursed her, would have been sufficient to satisfy him of the care that was taken of her health. He was very ill, and at length died of an oppression with which he was seized, which made him say as he was on the point of returning to Paris that he should take a much longer journey. He sent for his confessor, Father Deschamps, and, after lying in a state of insensibility for twenty-four hours, and receiving all the sacraments, he died, regretted and bitterly lamented by his family and his friends ; the King was much afflicted at the event, and, in short, the grief of losing so great a man, and so great a hero, whose place whole ages will not be able to supply, has been felt by all ranks. A singular circumstance happened three weeks ago, a little before the departure of the Prince for Fontainebleau. Vernillon, one of his gentlemen, returning from the chase at three o'clock, saw as he approached the castle at one of the windows of the armoury, an apparition, that is a man who had been dead and buried ; he dismounted and came nearer ; he still saw it ; his valet, who was with him said : " I see the same, sir, that you see." Vernillon had been silent, that his valet might speak of his own accord : they entered the castle together, and desired the keeper to give them the key to the armoury ; the keeper went with them ; they found all the windows closed and a silence which had been undisturbed for more than six months. This was told to the Prince : he appeared struck with it at first, and afterwards laughed at it. Every one heard the story and trembled for the Prince : you see what the event has been. Vernillon is said to be a man of strong understanding, and as little visionary as our friend Corbinelli could be ; and the same apparition was seen by the servant. As this story is true, I send it you, that you may make your own reflections upon it, as we have done.

Since this letter was begun I have seen Briole, who has made me weep plentifully at the simple and unaffected account he has given of this death ; it is above all praise. The letter he wrote to the King is the finest thing in the world ; His Majesty was interrupted three or four times by his tears, in reading it : it was a farewell, and an assurance of perfect fidelity, asking pardon nobly for his past errors, into which he had been forced by the misfortunes of the times, and thanking him for the recall of the Prince de Conti, in whose favour he said a great many things. He afterwards recommended to his family to be united, embraced them all, and made them all embrace one another in his presence, and promise to love each other as brothers. He gave a reward to all his people for their past services, begging their forgiveness for the ill example he had set them ; and displayed a Christian devotion in receiving the sacraments, which is a source of eternal comfort and admiration. I beg my compliments to M. de Vardes on this event. My dear sir, adieu.

LETTER *CLXXI

To the Count de Bussy

Paris, March 10, 1687.

Again, my dear cousin, have I to enter upon the melancholy subjects of death and lamentation. But how can I be silent on the most beautiful, the most magnificent, and the most splendid funeral pomp, which has been witnessed in the days of mortal man ? That of the late Prince, and all he has ever been ! His fathers are represented by medals, down to St. Louis ; all his victories by bas-relief, under canopies of open tents, supported by skeletons, whose attitudes are admirable. The mausoleum, which rises almost to the roof, is covered with a still higher canopy in the form of a pavilion, the four corners of which fall again like tents. The whole square of the chair is ornamented with these bas-reliefs, and devices underneath them, emblematic of the different actions of his life. That of

his league with the Spaniards is expressed by a dark night, with three Latin words, signifying that what is done in the absence of the sun should be concealed.[1] The whole is scattered over with fleurs-de-lys of a sombre colour, and a small lamp reflects ten thousand little stars. I forget half; but you will have the book, which will tell you all. If I did not suppose you have already received a copy I would have accompanied this letter by one; but a duplicate would have afforded you no pleasure.

Everybody has been to see this superb decoration. It has cost the present Prince a hundred thousand francs, but it is an expense which does him great honour. M. de Meaux pronounced the funeral oration: we shall see it in print. This, my dear cousin, is a rough sketch of the subject of the piece. We are still melancholy; but to cheer you a little I shall pass to another extreme, that is, from death to marriage, and from excessive pomp and ceremony to extreme homeliness and familiarity, both being as original as it is possible to be. It is the marriage of the son of the Duke de Grammont, of the age of fifteen, with the daughter of M. de Noailles, which is to take place this evening at Versailles. It is to be managed thus. No one is to be invited, no one to be apprised of it; the bride and bridegroom will each sup at home. At midnight they will meet at the church, without the father and mother being present, unless they are at that time at Versailles. The ceremony will take place; there will be no grand display of toilets, no putting the bride to bed; this will be left to the governor and governess to manage. The next morning they will not be tormented with witticisms and indecent jests. They will rise; the young man will attend mass and the King's dinner, and the young lady will dress herself as usual, and pay visits with her good mamma; she will not keep her bed in state, like a country bride, exposed to crowds of impertinent visitors; and this wedding (an event which is generally notorious enough) will be jumbled in the

[1] This reminds us of the ingenious idea of Michael Corneille, which has been seen in the gallery of Chantilly, where the muse of history is represented as tearing from the *Life of the Prince*, the pages which contain the account of his victories against his country.

most natural and prettiest manner possible, with all the other events of life, and will glide so insensibly into the usual train of things that no one will suppose a festival has taken place in the two families. This is what I was determined to finish my letter with ; and I contend, my dear cousin, that this picture is as extraordinary in its kind as the other.

I have just seen a prelate who was present at the funeral oration. He tells us that M. de Meaux surpassed himself, and that so fine a subject was never so well appreciated, and so ably handled. I have seen M. d'Autun here two or three times. He appears to me to be one of your best friends. I think him very agreeable ; he has so much affability that I do not wonder at the attachment of those with whom he associates. He has had friends of such high rank, by whom he has been so long and tenderly beloved, that this would be a sufficient claim upon our esteem if he had no other title to it. My daughter sends you a great many remembrances. She is engaged in a lawsuit which makes her not unlike the Countess de Pimbêche. I congratulate you on having to cultivate the body and mind of the little de Langhac. This is a fine name for administering medicaments, as Molière says ; and is an amusement in which we are daily engaged with the little de Grignan.

LETTER *CLXXII

To the Same

Paris, November 13, 1687.

I have just received from you, my dear cousin, the most delightful and affectionate letter possible. I have never seen friendship expressed so naturally, and in a manner so calculated to carry conviction with it. And it has had its effect : I believe my life necessary to the preservation of yours. I will give you, therefore, an account of it, to cheer you, and that you may understand exactly the state of my health.

I go back to the last days of my dear uncle the Abbé, to whom you well know I was under infinite obligations. It was to him I owed the comfort and happiness of my life ; it is to him you owe the pleasure you have experienced in my society : but for him, we should never have laughed together ; you are indebted to him for all my gaiety, my good humour, sprightliness, the gift of understanding you, the intelligence which made me comprehend what you had said, and guess what you were going to say : in short, the good Abbé, in extricating me from the abyss in which I was left at the death of M. de Sévigné, made me what I was, what you have seen me, and worthy of your friendship and esteem. I draw a veil over your wrongs : they are great, but I must forget them, and tell you how keenly I felt the loss of this agreeable source of all the happiness of my life. He died after a fever of seven days, like a young man, with sentiments of piety that affected me ; for God has given me principles of religion which have made me view properly this last scene of life. His had lasted for eighty years ; he lived in honour, and died a Christian : God grant that we may do the same. It was at the end of August that I wept his loss. I should never have quitted him, had he lived as long as I may live. But finding myself too much at liberty about the middle of September, I resolved to go to Vichy, to cure my imagination at least, of a sort of convulsions in my left hand, and of visionary vapours, which made me apprehensive of apoplexy. This projected journey gave the Duchess de Chaulnes the desire of taking it at the same time. I joined her ; and as I had a wish to return to Bourbon, I did not leave her : I sent for a quantity of the Vichy waters, which, heated in the well at Bourbon, are admirable. I drank some of these, and then some of the Bourbon waters, which made an excellent mixture. The two rivals are reconciled to each other : they have but one heart and one soul. Vichy reposes on the bosom of Bourbon, and warms herself by its fireside, that is, in the bubblings of its fountain. I have been so well, that when I asked to use the pump it was denied me, on the plea that my health did not require it : the doctors laughed at my complaints, treated them as visionary, and sent me back as a person in perfect health.

They so positively assured me of this that I have believed it, and I consider myself to-day as upon this footing. My daughter is delighted at it ; you know how she loves me.

Such, my dear cousin, is my situation. As your health depends upon mine, here is salutary provision for you. Be careful of your cold, and, in the same manner, make me continue well. We must go on together, and not forsake each other. I returned from Bourbon three weeks ago ; our pretty little abbey (Livri) was not disposed of ; we spent twelve days there : at length it has been given to the old Bishop of Nîmes, a very worthy prelate. I left it three days ago, painfully affected at bidding adieu for ever to this delightful retreat, to which I was so much attached : after weeping for the resident, I wept for the residence.

I know you wrote to me during my journey to Bourbon ; I have not wasted my time in answering you, but have given the reins to the temptation of talking of myself, without curb or limitation. I ask your pardon, and assure you that I will not indulge so much in this liberty another time ; for I know, and it is Solomon who says it, that " he who talketh much of himself is despised." Our friend Corbinelli says, that to judge how much we weary others by talking of ourselves, we have only to recollect how much others, by talking of themselves, weary us. This rule is general enough ; but I think I can find an exception to it to-day, for I should be glad if your pen were as inconsiderate as mine, and should be delighted if you would talk to me a great deal of yourself. It is this feeling that has induced me to enter into so terrific an account ; and, in confidence of the same feeling on your part, I shall make no apologies, but embrace you, my dear cousin, and you, my dear Coligny. I return Madame de Bussy a thousand thanks for her remembrance : it would be easier to kill me, than to make me write a word more.

LETTER CLXXIII

To the Countess de Grignan

Paris, Sunday, October 15, 1688.

It is now a week since we heard from you : you cannot imagine how tedious the time appears. I am just returned from a visit to Madame de la Fayette, who received a letter from her son on the eleventh : he informs her that our child is very well. The Chevalier has told you all he knows ; he is in despair at not being able to go to Fontainebleau : you would rather receive news from him, but we must submit to what God pleases. Madame de Lavardin has been under great concern about Jarzé, who, as he was passing through the trenches, had his hand taken off at the wrist by a cannon-ball, which obliged him to have his arm immediately amputated above the elbow ; this is a melancholy circumstance for so young a man ! Nothing, however, can exceed the precaution M. de Vauban has taken for the security of every one : the Dauphin goes the first to the trenches, and the Duke and Prince de Conti are not wanting in their parts ; but it is forbidden under pain of imprisonment that any of the volunteers should follow them, or quit the respective regiments to which they belong.[1] All will go well, my child ; in the name of God, be careful of yourself, and take a dose or two of that patience we all live upon here ; continual uneasiness is as prejudicial as it is useless.

The Chevalier and I took a walk to Vincennes yesterday ; you will readily conceive the subject of our thoughts and conversation. I write this to you from his apartment ; he is just going to send away his packet. Adieu, therefore, my beloved Countess ; I cannot reconcile myself to be without you ; andmy affection for you is such, as I believe no one else can attain.

[1] The Marquis de Grignan was now making his first campaign in the quality of volunteer in the regiment of Champagne, of which his father, the Count de Grignan, had been Colonel.

LETTER *CLXXIV

To the Same

Paris, All Saints' Day, 1688, *nine o'clock at night.*

Philippsburg is taken, and your son is well! I have only to turn this phrase in every possible way, for I will not change my text. Learn then again from this note, that *your son is well, and that Philippsburg is taken* ! A courier is just arrived at M. de Villacerf's, who says that the Dauphin's courier reached Fontainebleau while Father Gaillard was preaching ; and that the sermon was immediately interrupted ; and thanks returned to God for this brilliant achievement. No further particulars are known, except that there was no assault, and that M. du Plessis was right when he said the governor had ordered wagons to carry away his equipage. Recover your breath, then, my dear child, and let the first thing you do be to return thanks to God : no other siege is talked of ; rejoice that your son has witnessed that of Philippsburg ; it is an admirable period for him : it is the Dauphin's first campaign. Would you not have been grieved if he had been the only person of his age who was not present on this occasion, in which all the rest glory ? But let us not look back ; everything has happened as we could have wished. It is you, my dear Count, we may thank for it : I congratulate you on the joy you must experience, and beg my compliments also to the coadjutor : you are all relieved from great anxiety. Sleep soundly then, my beautiful love, sleep soundly, on the assurance we give you ; if you are covetous of grief, as we formerly said, seek some other occasion, for God has preserved your dear child to you : we are in raptures, and in this feeling I embrace you with an affection that I believe you cannot doubt.

LETTER *CLXXV

To the Same

Paris, Thursday evening, November 30, 1688.

I write to you this evening, my child, because I am going to-morrow, at nine o'clock, to the service for our poor St. Aubin, a respect our holy Carmelites pay him out of pure friendship ; I shall see them afterwards, and you will be praised, as you often are : from thence I shall go and dine with Madame de la Fayette.

You give me an excellent idea of your eldest daughter ; I see her before me ; pray embrace her for me ; I rejoice that she is happy. For your son, you may love him as much as you please ; he deserves it ; every one speaks highly of him, and praises him in a way that would give you pleasure : we expect him this week. I have felt all the force of the phrase he made use of to gain esteem, " which must come, or tell the reason why " ; it brought tears into my eyes at the moment ; but esteem is come already, and will not have to say why it stayed away. The reputation of this child is already commenced, and will now only increase. The Chevalier is perfectly satisfied, I assure you. I was at first uneasy at the contusion, from the the fear of consequences : but when I saw the Chevalier was delighted at it ; when I heard that he had received the compliments of the whole Court, and of Madame de Maintenon, upon the occasion, who replied to him with a delightful tone and manner, on his saying it was nothing, " Sir, it is much better than nothing " ; when I myself am overwhelmed too with compliments of congratulation ; I own all this has vanquished me, and I rejoice with them all, and with M. de Grignan, who so well fixed and arranged this dear boy's first campaign.

You cannot mention the subject of our dinners and suppers more opportunely ; I have just supped at the Lieutenant's, with Madame de Vauvineux, the Abbé de la Fayette, the

Abbé Bigorré, and Corbinelli. I have supped twice at Madame de Coulange's with no other company. The *Divinities* are out of joint : the Duchess de Lude has been at Verneuil, she is now at Versailles. The Dauphin arrived there on Sunday ; the King received him in the Forest of Boulogne ; the Dauphiness, Monsieur, Madame, Madame de Bourbon, the Princess de Conti, and Madame de Guise, were in the carriage. The Dauphin alighted, and the King would do the same : the Dauphin embraced his father's knees ; the King said to him : " It is not thus I wish to receive you ; you deserve a different welcome " : and they threw their arms round each other, with the warmest affection : the Dauphin then embraced those who were in the carriage, and took his seat there. The Chevalier can tell you more. I believe you are informed of the readiness with which the King granted your request respecting Avignon : you must therefore, my beloved child, defer to another opportunity the plan you had formed of hanging yourself.

I have kept at home : the first visitor I had was M. de Pomponne, who loves and admires you ; for to admire and to remember you are the same thing. Afterwards I had Madame (la presidente) Croiset, the President Rossignol ; and we had to begin your praises anew, and the account of your lawsuit. I have seen St. Hérem, who sends you a thousand compliments on the contusion, and thanks you for yours to him, on the fall of his son ; he will benefit by the overthrow of saucepans at M. de Rochefoucauld's, whose good cheer destroyed him. Adieu, most amiable and beloved child : I am going to bed to please you, as you kept from drowning to please me. There is nothing for which I am so much obliged to you as for the preservation of your health. I said to you yesterday, I believe, that your warm weather and your gnats showed me too clearly, that we had not the same sun : it froze last week most severely ; after that it snowed ; so that yesterday we could not stand : now the rain pours in torrents, and we cannot tell whether there is such a thing as the sun in creation.

LETTER CLXXVI

To the Same

Paris, Friday, December 24, 1688.

The Marquis has been to Versailles alone, where he conducted himself extremely well ; he dined with M. de Maine at M. de Montausier's ; supped at Madame d'Armagnac's ; paid his court at all the levees and all the couchees. The Dauphin ordered him the wax candlestick ; in short, he is thrown into the world, and he acts his part well. He is in fashion, and never had anyone so fortunate an introduction, nor so high a reputation, for I should never make an end, were I to tell you of all who speak well of him. I am inconsolable to think you have not the pleasure of seeing and embracing him, as I do every day.

But does it not seem, while I am chatting to you with so much tranquillity, as if I had nothing to communicate ? Listen, listen, I say, to a piece of news that is scarcely worth the trouble of relating. The Queen of England and the Prince of Wales, with his nurse and a single servant to rock his cradle, are expected here to-morrow. The King has sent his carriages to meet them upon the road to Calais, where the Queen arrived on Tuesday last, the 21st instant, accompanied by M. de Lauzun. M. Courtin, who is just returned from Versailles, gave us the following account yesterday at Madame de la Fayette's. You know that M. de Lauzun resolved about six weeks ago to go over to England ; he could not better employ his leisure, and he did not desert the King of England while every one else betrayed or abandoned him. In short, on Sunday last, the 10th of this month, the King, who had formed his plan, went to bed with the Queen, as usual, dismissed those who still serve him, and rose an hour after to order a valet-de-chambre to introduce a man whom he would find at the door of the

antichamber ; this was M. de Lauzun. The King said to him, " I intruſt you with the care of the Queen and my son : you muſt risk everything, and endeavour to conduct them to France." M. de Lauzun thanked him, as you may suppose ; but he desired to take a gentleman of Avignon with him, of the name of St. Victor, known to possess great courage and merit. St. Victor took the little Prince under his cloak ; he was said to be at Portsmouth, when he lay concealed in the Palace. M. de Lauzun presented his hand to the Queen ; think what a leave-taking hers muſt have been with the King ; and, accompanied by the two women I have mentioned to you, they went into the ſtreet, and took a hackney-coach. They afterwards sailed down the river in a little boat, where they experienced such a tempeſt that they knew not what would become of them. At length, at the mouth of the Thames, they went on board a yacht, M. de Lauzun ſtanding by the maſter, intending, if he proved a traitor, to throw him into the sea. But as he supposed he had only common passengers on board, which was moſt frequently the case, he carelessly sailed through fifty Dutch ships, who did not even notice this little bark ; and thus protected by heaven, and sheltered from the threatened danger, she landed safely at Calais, where M. de Charoſt received the Queen with all the reſpect imaginable. The courier, who brought the news yeſterday at noon to the King, related all these particulars ; and at the same time orders were sent to dispatch the King's carriages to meet this Queen, and conduct her to Vincennes, which is fitting up for her. It is said the King will join her upon the road. This is the firſt volume of the romance, the sequel you shall have immediately. We have juſt been assured that to complete the adventure, M. de Lauzun, after having put the Queen and Prince safely into the hands of M. de Charoſt, proposed returning to England with St. Victor, to share the sad and miserable fate of the King. I admire M. Lauzun's planet, which will again render his name brilliant, at the very time it appeared to be sunk in oblivion. He carried 20,000 piſtoles to the King of England. This, my child, is indeed a very noble and heroic action ; and what completes it is his returning to a country

where, according to all appearances, he will perish, either with the King, or by the rage into which he has thrown the people by the last stroke he has played upon them. I leave you to reflect upon this romance, and embrace you with more than common affection.

LETTER CLXXVII

To the Same

Paris, Friday, December 3, 1688.

Per torner dunque al nostro proposito,[1] I must tell you my child, that all the uncertainties of the day before yesterday, which seemed to be fixed by the assurances M. de Lamoignon gave us that the King of England was at Calais, are now changed into the certainty that he is detained in England ; and that if this ill fortune has not befallen him, he has perished ; for he was to make his escape, and embark a few hours after the Queen : so that though we have no certain intelligence of his being arrested, there is not a single person who does not now credit it. Such is our situation ; and such the way in which we are closing the present year, and entering upon that of '89 ; a year marked out by extraordinary predictions, as pregnant with great events : not one, however, will take place that is not agreeable to the order of Providence, like all our actions, and all our journeyings. We must submit to everything, and look boldly in the face of futurity ; this is going a great way.

In the meanwhile, Count, I address myself to you. Yesterday the knights of St. Michael went through the ceremony with several of those of the order of the Holy Ghost, at the hour I mentioned to you after vespers, and to-morrow the rest will do the same. The Chevalier will inform you how it is managed with respect to the absentees. You must make your profession of faith, and give an account of your life and manners. Of this you will be duly informed ; you are not the only one ; and

[1] To return then to our proposition.

in the meantime *hold off, fair and softly*. Yesterday M. de Chevreuse, of the order of St. Michael, passed before M. de la Rochefoucauld, who said to him, "Sir, you pass before me, which you have no right to do." M. de Chevreuse replied, "Sir, I have a right, for I am Duke de Luynes." "Oh, sir," rejoined the other, "in this respect I yield to you." The gazette will inform you, my dear Count, that M. de Luynes has given this duchy to his son, with the King's permission; and M. de Chevreuse, who will henceforward be called M. de Luynes, the duchy of Chevreuse to his son, who will be styled Duke de Montfort. Your son's comrades are highly distinguished by titles. It is said that some troops are to be sent into Brittany with M. de Mumont, Major-general, to be under the command of M. de Chaulnes; there will be encampments in all the provinces. You need only refer to the map, to judge whether we have occasion to be on our guard on all sides: cast your eyes for a moment over all Europe. Madame de Barillon is very uneasy respecting her husband [1]; but it is said at random, for no letters arrive, that he is safe, though the chapel of the King of England has been pulled down, as well as that belonging to the Ambassador's household; time will clear all this. But who am I speaking to? is it still to this Count? My dear child, your good lady, who swore she would not touch a card till the King of England had won a battle, will not probably play again for a long time; poor woman! The Prince of Orange is in London—this is still the subject of my letter, as it is of all conversation, for every one considers himself as concerned in this great scene. The Queen is still in a convent at Boulogne, always in tears at the absence of her husband, whom she passionately loves.

Madame de Brinon is quite forgotten. A new comedy is said to be in rehearsal, which is to be represented at St. Cyr, and is called *Esther*. The carnival does not promise to be very gay. My son's letters are constantly filled with the most affectionate sentiments for you and M. de Grignan. We expect your letters, but probably shall not answer them till Monday. The Chevalier and I have very long conversations about you;

[1] M. de Barillon was the French Ambassador in England.

he is tolerably well, and when your son returns from Chalons, he intends to accompany him to Versailles. The good Corbinelli exhausts his rhetoric upon the present situation of affairs, and at the same time adores you. Adieu, my lovely child ; I embrace you a thousand times, and wish you a happy year in that of 1689.

LETTER CLXXVIII

To the Same

Paris, Monday, January 10, 1689.

We often stumble upon the same ideas, my dear child ; I even think that I wrote to you from the Rocks what you say in your last letter respecting time. I now consent that it should fly ; the days have no longer anything so dear and precious for me as I found them to contain when you were at the Hôtel de Carnavalet. I enjoyed, I made the most of, every hour ; I treasured it as a miser does his gold ; but in absence, the case is different ; time cannot fly fast enough till the wished-for period arrives ; we hurry it along, and would willingly dispose of all the intermediate space in favour of the days to which we aspire ; it is a piece of tapestry which we are eager to finish ; we are lavish of hours, and bestow them on anyone. But, I own, that when I reflect on the point to which this profusion of hours and days leads me, I tremble. I am no longer certain of any, and reason presents me with the image of what I am certain to find in my way. My child, I will put an end to these reflections with you, and endeavour to turn them to my own advantage.

The Abbé Têtu is in an alarming way for want of sleep. The physicians would not answer for his intellect ; he is sensible of his situation, which is an additional calamity : he is kept alive merely by opium ; he seeks for diversion and amusement, and accordingly frequents public places. We want him to go to Versailles to see the King and Queen of



LOUIS XIV

England, and the Prince of Wales. Can there be a grander spectacle, or one more capable of affording the highest interest? It appears that the Prince of Orange favoured the King's flight. The King was sent to Exeter, where it was his intention to go; the front of his house was well guarded and all the back doors left open. The Prince was not inclined to sacrifice his father-in-law; he remains in London in the place of the King, without taking upon himself the title, being only desirous of restoring what he thinks the true religion, and supporting the laws of the country, without spilling a drop of blood: this is precisely the reverse of what we thought of him; we see him in a very different point of view. Our King, however, acts in a manner almost divine with respect to their Britannic Majesties, for is it not being the representative of the Almighty, to support a King banished, betrayed, and abandoned? The noble ambition of our sovereign is gratified by acting this part; he went to meet the Queen, with all his household, and a hundred coaches and six. When he perceived the Prince of Wales's carriage, he alighted and affectionately embraced him; he then ran to the Queen, who was by this time alighted; he saluted her, talked with her some time, placed her at his right hand in his carriage, and presented the Dauphin and Monsieur to her, who were also in the carriage, and conducted her to St. Germain, where she found everything prepared for her like a Queen, all sorts of apparel, and a rich casket containing six thousand louis-d'ors. The King of England was expected the next day at St. Germain, where the King waited for him; he arrived late: His Majesty went to the end of the guard-room to meet him; the King of England made an inclination, as if to embrace his knees, but the King prevented him, and embraced him three or four times very cordially. They talked together in a low voice for nearly a quarter of an hour; the King presented the Dauphin and Monsieur to him, the Princes of the blood, and Cardinal de Bonzi. He conducted him to the Queen's apartment, who could scarcely refrain from tears; after a conversation of a few minutes His Majesty led them to the apartment of the Prince of Wales, where they again conversed for some time, and he then withdrew, not choosing to

be attended back, saying to the King, "This is your house; when I come you will do the honours of it, and I will do the honours of mine when you come to Versailles." The next day, which was yesterday, the Dauphiness went there with all the Court. I know not how they regulated the chairs, for they had those belonging to the Queen of Spain; and the Queen-mother of England was treated as a daughter of France; I shall hereafter send you these particulars. His Majesty sent the King of England ten thousand louis-d'ors; the latter looks old and fatigued; the Queen is thin, with fine black eyes swelled with weeping; a fine complexion, but rather pale; a large mouth, beautiful teeth, a fine figure, and a great share of sense; no wonder if with all these she pleases every one who beholds her. Here is matter for general conversation, that will not soon be exhausted.

The poor Chevalier can neither write nor go to Versailles, which grieves us sadly, as he has a thousand things to do there; but he is not ill: on Saturday he supped with Madame de Coulanges, Madame de Vauvineux, M. de Duras, and your son, at the Lieutenant's, where the healths of the first and second were drank, that is to say, Madame de la Fayette's and yours, for you have yielded to the date of friendship. Yesterday Madame de Coulanges gave a very pretty supper to the gouty gentlemen, the Abbé de Marsillac, the Chevalier de Grignan, and M. de Lamoignon, whose nephritic complaints stood him in stead of the gout: his wife and the *divinities* were admitted in consequence of colds which they are never without; I in consideration of the rheumatism I had twelve years ago, and Coulanges, for deserving to have the gout. There was no scarcity of conversation; the little man sang, and gave the Abbé de Marsillac great pleasure, which he expressed by his admiration, and by imitating the tones and manners, which reminded me so strongly of his father that I could not help being affected. Your son was at the Mesdemoiselles de Castelnau's; there is a younger sister, very pretty, and very agreeable, who is quite to your son's taste, and he leaves the squint-eyed girl to Sanzei: he took a hautboy with him, and they danced till midnight. This society is very pleasant to the

Marquis, as he meets Saint Hérem, Janin, Choiseul, and Ninon there ; so that he is not in a foreign country. The Chevalier does not seem to be in haste to marry him, nor does M. de Lamoignon seem very desirous of marrying his daughter. We can say nothing with respect to the marriage of M. de Mirepoix,[1] this is the work of M. de Montfort : people seem to be infatuated, or else their heads are turned, for they do not think as they used to do ; in short, this man seems impelled by his destiny, and what can be done in such a case ?

M. de Lauzun is not gone back to England : he has an apartment at Versailles, and is perfectly satisfied ; he has written to Mademoiselle to have the honour of seeing her, which has given her great offence. I have performed a masterpiece ; I have been to visit Madame de Ricouart, who is lately returned, very well pleased at being a widow. You have nothing to do but appoint me to complete your acknowledgments, like your romances, do you recollect ? I thank the amiable Paulina for her letter, I am confident her person would please me : so she could then find no appellation for me but that of *Madam* ?[2] this is being very serious. Adieu, my dear child ; preserve your health, in other words, your beauty, which I so much admire.

[1] Gaston John Baptist de Levis, Marquis de Mirepoix, married 16th January, 1689, to Anne Charlotte Maria de Saint Nectaire, daughter of Henry Francis, Duke de la Ferté, and of Mary Gabriel Angelica de la Mothe Houdancourt.

[2] It must have been observed that the Marquis de Grignan followed this etiquette with his mother, which was the custom among persons of high rank, and particularly in the southern provinces where the Roman laws gave fathers an absolute power over their children, which inspired children with more respect than love, and exacted the forms of submission, even in the overflowings of the heart. Madame de Sévigné was averse to this false dignity, the most gloomy mask that love can assume ; and it has been seen that she even laughed at her daughter, who, in speaking of her grandfather, had written to her, *monsieur votre père*. Everyone knows the humorous speech of the great Condé, before a man who affected to say Monsieur and Madame in speaking of his relations : " Monsieur my groom, go and tell Monsieur my coachman, to put Messieurs my horses to Monsieur my coach."

LETTER CLXXIX

To the Same

Paris, Wednesday, January 12, 1689.

You retired then at five o'clock in the afternoon ; you drew King and Queen at dinner ; you were in as good company as at Paris. It will not be my fault if the Archbishop (of Aix) does not know that you are satisfied with him ; I informed Madame de la Fayette of this the other day, who was much pleased with the information ; she enjoins you both to lay aside the spirit and way of thinking of Provence. But to come to the King and Queen of England. It is so extraordinary to have this Court here, that it is the constant subject of conversation. The regulation of rank and precedency is to be attended to, in order to render life agreeable to those who are so unlikely to be restored. This the King said the other day, adding, that the English King was the best man in the world ; that he should hunt with him ; that he should come to Marli and Trianon ; and that the courtiers should habituate themselves to him. The King of England does not give his hand to the Dauphin, and does not re-conduct him. The Queen has not kissed Monsieur, who is offended at this ; she said to the King, "Tell me what you wish me to do ; if you would have me follow the French fashion, I will salute whom you please ; but it is not the custom of England to salute anyone." She paid a visit to the Dauphiness, who was ill, and who received her in bed. No one sits in England ; I believe the Duchesses will follow the French fashion, and behave to her as they did to her mother-in-law.[1] We are greatly taken up with this new Court.

In the meantime, the Prince of Orange is in London, where he has imprisoned several Lords ; he is severe, and will soon

[1] Henrietta Maria of France, daughter of Henry IV, and wife of Charles I, King of England.

make himself hated. M. Schomberg is Commander-in-chief in Holland, in the place of this Prince, and his son is to have the reversion : so the mask is now completely thrown off.

I send you a list of the changes expected amongst the intendants. M. de Pommereuil is to be in Brittany : God grant M. de Luxembourg may not have the command of the troops there ; this would be a doleful affair for our friends ![1] We tremble at the thought of it. You know that Marshal de Lorges is going into Guyenne with St. Ruth under him. In short, we are preparing to be upon our guard both at home and abroad. Consider how many troops, and what strength, are necessary to attend to so many things at once.

The Chevalier is always fixed to his chair in his apartment ; it has been judged improper for him to be out at night, and this situation, which disables him from going to Versailles, is very mortifying to him. I wish I could afford him some consolation and amusement ; but the gloomy disposition occasioned by the gout, makes everything indifferent to him. I should be glad to be serviceable to him ; but, to my great regret, I am quite useless. I am constantly making your compliments, and endeavouring to please him by your kind remembrances. Madame de Coulanges is full of acknowledgments ; she bids me say a thousand kind things for her. She is wholly taken up with the Abbé Têtu, who is really very ill ; he is at least troubled with low spirits and an inability to sleep, which the power of opium fails to remove.

Your son is a very pretty fellow ; he was yesterday at the opera with the Dauphin. He has written to M. de Carcassonne, and will write to him again ; the friendship of this uncle must be kept up to produce any effect, and I will take care that he does not neglect him. You paint to me in very natural colours the deformity of your bridegrooms ; and I fancy myself present at the nuptials. I am very well pleased that, contrary to your custom, you have told M. de Gaillard of the impression his merit and his penetrating looks have made upon me. The marriage of M. de Mirepoix seems to be the effect of magic.

[1] M. and Madame de Chaulnes.

LETTER CLXXX

To the Same

Paris, Monday, January 17, 1689.

My letter, then, is dignified with a title ; this is a proof of its singular merit. I am glad my story amused you. I can never guess at the effect my letters will produce, but this has been a happy one.

If you sought an opportunity of coming to an explanation with the Archbishop, instead of suffering to ferment the misunderstanding which people endeavour to create between you, a short time would clear up the whole, or you would silence chatterers ; either of these is desirable, and you will find good result from it ; you will put an end, it is true, to the amusement of the Provençals ; but it is only silencing ridiculous impertinence. M. de Barillon is arrived ; he has found a family group with many of whose faces he was not acquainted. He is grown very fat, and said to M. de Harlai, " Sir, do not remind me of my fat, and I will say nothing to you of your lean." He is very lively, and much of the same disposition as his namesake whom you know. I will pay all your compliments to him, when they will not appear forced : I have done so with regard to Madame de Sully, who returns you a thousand with a very good grace, and to the Countess,[1] who is too witty upon M. de Lauzun, whom she wished to raise to the pinnacle of honour, and who has neither an apartment at Versailles, nor the free admittance he formerly had. He is merely returned to Court and his exploit does not appear so extraordinary, though a very pretty romance was at first made out of it.

This English Court is quite established at St. Germain ; they would not accept more than 15,000 livres a month, and have regulated their Court upon that foundation. The Queen is very much liked ; our King converses very pleasantly with

[1] The Countess de Fiesque, the constant friend of M. de Lauzun, and who often performed the part of mediatrix between him and Mademoiselle.

her ; she has good sense without affectation. The King wished the Dauphiness to pay her the first visit, but she was always so conveniently indisposed that this Queen paid her a visit three days ago, admirably dressed ; a black velvet robe, a beautiful petticoat, her hair tastefully disposed, a figure like the Princess de Conti's, and great dignity of manner. The King received her as she alighted ; she went first into his apartment, where she had a chair below the King's ; here she remained half an hour ; he then conducted her to the Dauphiness, who was up ; this occasioned a little surprise ; the Queen said to her, " I expected to have found you in bed, Madam." " I wished to rise, Madam," replied the Dauphiness, " to receive the honour Your Majesty does me." The King left them, as the Dauphiness has no chair in his presence. The Queen took her place, with the Dauphiness on her right hand, Madame on her left, and there were three other chairs for the three young Princes. They conversed together for upwards of half an hour, several Duchesses were present, and the Court was very numerous. At length she retired ; the King gave orders to be informed of it, and handed her back to her carriage. I do not know how far the Dauphiness went with her, but I shall hear. The King, upon his return, highly praised the Queen ; he said, " This is how a queen ought to be both in person and mind, holding her Court with dignity." He admired her courage in misfortunes, and her affection for her husband ; for it is certain that she loves him, as that hateful woman, Madame de R . . . , told you. Some of our ladies, who wished to assume the airs of Princesses, did not kiss the Queen's robe, some of the Duchesses wished to avoid it also, but the King was displeased at this, and they now pay her homage. Madame de Chaulnes has been informed of these particulars, but has not yet performed this duty. She left the Marquis at Versailles, the young gentleman being very highly amused there; he has informed his uncle that he should go to-day to the ballet at Trianon ; the Chevalier will send you his letter. He is there, then, upon his good behaviour, executing all the commissions his uncle has given him, to accustom him to exactness in accounts ; what advantage will he not derive from this sort

of education ! I have received an answer from M. de Carcassonne ; it is a curious performance, but it must be passed over in silence ; you may assure yourself I shall reply to it properly ; he has taken seriously, and quite misunderstood, my raillery. Ah, my child ! I perfectly comprehend your tears, when you figure to yourself this little fellow at the head of his company, and think of all the good and ill fortune that may befall him in that situation ! The Abbé Têtu is constantly immersed in the gloom of the vapours. I have made known to Madame de Coulanges all your kind expressions ; she is always desirous of writing to you in my letter, but it never takes place. The Chevalier does not like concluding with professions of kindness ; but without attending to him I shall embrace you tenderly and tell you that I love you with an affection, supported by the friendship you bear me, and proportionate to your merit ; where is the harm of ending a letter thus, and saying what we constantly feel and constantly think ?

Good day, Count, you are both then of the same opinion as to your business and expense ? Would to God you had always been so ! Good day, my darling Paulina ; I cannot help laughing at you, for taking six weeks to consider what name you should give me, *grandmother* or *madam* ; at length, however, you have decided for *madam.*

[*Passage by Corbinelli omitted*]

LETTER CLXXXI

To Madame de Grignan

Paris, Monday, February 21, 1689.

It is certain that we are separated from each other by a grievous distance ; this is enough to make us shudder ; but what would it have been if I had added to it the road from hence

to the Rocks or to Rennes? This, however, will not take place so soon. Madame de Chaulnes wishes to see the termination of several affairs, and I am only afraid she will set out too late, considering my intention of returning next winter, which I must do for several reasons; the first of which is that I am convinced M. de Grignan will be obliged to return on account of his knighthood, and you cannot take a better opportunity to escape from your falling, uninhabitable castle and come and pay your court a little with the knight of the order, who will not be a knight till that time. I paid mine the other day at St. Cyr, much more agreeably than I expected. We, that is Madame de Coulanges, Madame de Bagnols, the Abbé Têtu, and I went on Saturday. We found our places kept; an officer told Madame de Coulanges that Madame de Maintenon had ordered a place for her next herself: you see what honour is paid her. "You, Madam," said he, "may choose." I placed myself with Madame de Bagnols, in the second row behind the Duchesses. Marshal de Bellefond came and placed himself by choice at my right hand, and before us were the Duchesses d'Auvergne, de Coislin, and de Sully. The Marshal and I listened to the tragedy with an attention that was remarked, and bestowed some praises in a low voice that were very well placed. I cannot tell you the extreme beauty of this piece: it is a performance not easy to represent, and is inimitable: it is the union of music, poetry, singing, and character, so perfect and complete that there is nothing we wish to alter. The young ladies who represent kings and great personages seem to be made on purpose. It commands attention, and the only unpleasant circumstance attending it is that so fine a production should at last end. Everything in it is simple and innocent, sublime, and affecting; the sacred history is so faithfully adhered to as to create respect; all the airs corresponding with the words, which are taken from the Psalms or Ecclesiastes, and interwoven with the subject, are singularly beautiful; the taste and attention of the audience are the criterions of the merit of the piece. I was delighted with it, and so was the Marshal, who left his place to inform the King how much he was gratified, and that he was seated next to

a lady who was very worthy of seeing *Esther*. The King approached our seat, and having turned round, addressed himself to me : " I am told, Madam," said he, " that the piece has given you satisfaction." I replied, with perfect self-possession, " Sire, I am delighted ; what I feel is beyond the power of words to describe." The King continued, " Racine has great talents." I replied, " Sire, he has indeed ; and so have these young people : they enter into the subject as if it had been their sole employment." " Ah ! that is very true," he rejoined. And he then retired, leaving me the object of universal envy. As I was almost the only new spectator, the King took pleasure in observing my genuine admiration, which was without noise or parade.[1] The Prince and Princess came and spoke a word to me, Madame de Maintenon flashed upon me like lightning, and then retired with the King. I answered every one, being in one of my happiest moods. We returned at night with flambeaux. I supped at Madame de Coulange's, to whom the King had also spoken with an air of affability that made him appear fascinating. I saw the Chevalier at night. I related to him very naturally my little felicities, being unwilling to conceal them without a reason, as some people do. He was pleased, and here I conclude upon this head. I am sure he did not afterwards find in me any ridiculous vanity, or the transports of a vulgar country bumpkin. Ask him. M. de Meaux talked to me a good deal about you, and so did the Prince. I pitied you for not being present ; but how was it possible ? One cannot be everywhere. You were at your opera at Marseilles. As *Atys* is not only too happy, but too charming, it is impossible you could have been tired with it. Paulina must have been surprised at such a spectacle ; she has no right to wish for a more perfect one. I have so pleasing an idea of Marseilles, that I am persuaded you are amused there ; and I will back the dissipations of that place against those of Aix.

But on that very Saturday, after the representation of *Esther*, the King was informed of the death of the young Queen of

[1] By mentioning the circumstance to which she believed she was indebted for this little favour of the King, she proves sufficiently that she was not so much elated with it as has been pretended.

Spain,[1] who was carried off in two days by a violent vomiting : this has very much the air of foul play. The King informed Monsieur of it the next day, which was yesterday ; great was the grief upon the occasion ; Madame wept bitterly, and the King retired in a flood of tears.

It is said there is good news from England ; not only the Prince of Orange is not elected King or Protector, but he is given to understand that he and his troops have nothing to do but return : this shortens our solicitude. If this news should gain ground, our Brittany will be in less agitation, and my son will not have the mortification of commanding the nobility of the Viscounty of Rennes, and the Barony of Vitré. They have chosen him, against his will, to be at their head. Anyone else would be greatly elated with this honour ; but he is vexed at it, not liking, under any title whatever, to take the field in that way.

[1] Maria-Louisa of Orleans, daughter of Monsieur, and of Henrietta-Anne of England, his first wife.

Madame de la Fayette says in her Memoirs, that the Queen of Spain was poisoned by a cup of chocolate. Dangeau affirms that it was by an eel pie. Madame, in her *Lettres Originales*, maintains that the poison was communicated by raw oysters.

Voltaire has denied this poisoning, as well as several others. It was a system of the historian. But he only confutes Dangeau's account, who had said that three of the Queen's women had died in consequence of eating of the same dish. Against this detail he brings forward respectable authority.

Madame de la Fayette, who, in the life of Madame (Henrietta of England), had not dared to confirm the opinion of her having died by poison, joined with Voltaire in that of the Queen of Spain, daughter of this Princess.

The evidence of Madame (de Bavière) would be stronger if she were not so partial, and did not show herself so ready to give credit to every crime. What she adds that it was two of the Queen's French waiting women who poisoned her, is very improbable.

She says, however, that it was the Earl of Mansfield who procured the poison ; a circumstance which agrees with the common report of that period.

In fact, all the letters and memoirs of contemporary writers agree in saying that the Council of Spain, devoted to the Emperor and the Prince of Orange, and resolved to enter into the league against France, wished to remove a Queen who was too good a Frenchwoman, and who, governing her husband, was too great an obstacle to the projects of war that had been formed.

It is true that such a report at the moment of the breaking out of hostilities cannot pass for an historical proof ; but it must be owned that it very nearly resembles truth. We may also say that the recital of the Duke of St. Simon, who had been Ambassador in Spain, not only confirms that of Madame, but adds many circumstances to it. According to him the Countess de Soissons, who was then at Madrid, administered the poison, suborned by the Earl of Mansfield.

Your son went to Versailles, to amuse himself during the carnival ; but he found the Court in grief for the Queen of Spain. He would have returned ere this, if his uncle were not upon the point of going to meet him. This is a very melancholy and mournful carnival. I supped last night at M. Camus's, where I met the Duchess de Lude, Madame de Coulanges, Madame de St. Germain, the Chevalier de Grignan, M. de Troyes, and Corbinelli. We were very gay, talked of you with great regard, esteem, and regret for your absence ; in short, with a lively remembrance of you : you will come and renew these feelings. Madame de Durfort is dying of a malignant fever, and Madame de la Vieuville of the smallpox. Adieu, my beloved child ; of all the provincial commanders be assured M. de Grignan's situation is the best.

LETTER *CLXXXII

From Madame de Sévigné to the President de Moulceau

Wednesday, March 2, 1689.

What things, sir, may not be said ! What a period in the history of our monarch is the manner in which he has received the King of England ! The presents with which he has loaded him in setting out from hence for Ireland ; vessels at Brest where he now is, frigates, troops, officers ; the Count d'Avaux as Ambassador extraordinary and adviser, and who is also to have the care of the troops and money ; two millions on his departure, and as much afterwards as he wants ! Besides these great things, he has given him his arms, his helmet, his cuirass, which cannot fail of bringing good fortune to him. He has given him arms sufficient for ten or twelve thousand men. And as to little conveniences, they are innumerable : post-chaises admirably made, calèches, carriage and saddle-horses, services of gold and silver, toilets, linen, camp-beds, magnificent

swords of ſtate, swords for service, piſtols ; in short, everything of every kind that can be thought of ; and in embracing him as he bid him adieu he said to him, " You cannot say that I am not affected at your departure : I own to you, however, that I wish never to see you again. But if, unfortunately, you should return, be assured you will find me as you leave me." Nothing could be better said, nothing more juſt ; generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, were never exercised as they have been by His Majeſty on this occasion.

We hope that the Irish war will be a powerful diversion, and prevent the Prince of Orange from tormenting us, by descents upon our coaſt ; and thus our three hundred thousand soldiers, our armies so well ſtationed everywhere, will only serve to make the King feared, without anyone daring to attack him.

This is a time of political discussion. I should very much like to hear you talk over these great events. I enclose the opinion of a reſpectable upholſterer on the queſtions, reſpecting furniture, of Madame de Moulceau ; but, whatever he may say of a gold fringe and double taffeties for curtains, and though there are many such here, nothing is so pretty, so suitable, or so cool for the summer, as curtains made of these beautiful taffeties single, and tapeſtry the same. I have seen them at several houses, and admire them exceedingly : everything muſt be looped up, and plaited, as he has directed ; for the other kind of furniture you muſt have damask or brocade.

Our *friend* will give you an account himself of what he knows, but what it is I do not know ; for, since he has resided here, I never see him ; and when I ask him the reason of this he replies that I am *too near*. This pleasantry is a truth. If I did not sometimes contrive to ſtumble upon him, when he is leaving the house to attend one or other of the three or four dinners, to which he is daily invited, he would be a ſtranger to my eyes. I am obliged to wish him again at the Faubourg de St. Germain, to resume the intercourse that has subsiſted between us for more than thirty years. In this conduct, sir, is there anything that any jealousy can lay hold of ? Yours will be fully satisfied.

M. de la Trousse has taken a milk diet all the winter, and is much better : it is supposed he will have a separate command

in Poitou. There are three thousand infantry, and all together five or six armies ; but no one yet knows precisely what poſt he is to have : my daughter's is in Provence, mine will soon be in Brittany.

The little Marquis has a beautiful company in his uncle's regiment ; and I shall everywhere preserve for you the trueſt eſteem, accompanied by a regard which muſt make the jealous tremble.

[*Passage from M. de Corbinelli omitted*]

A thousand respects to your lady ; I wish I could render her greater service.

Does Madame . . . dislike the action that is to be brought againſt her ?

LETTER CLXXXIII

To the Countess de Grignan

Paris, Wednesday, March 23, 1689.

I shall not retract the praises I have beſtowed on the tragedy of *Eſther* ; I shall be delighted with the harmony and novelty of this spectacle as long as I live : I was in raptures with it ; I found in it a thousand things so juſt, so well introduced, and so important to a King, that I entered with uncommon spirit into the pleasure arising from the utterance, in fiction and song, of the moſt solid truths : I was affected with these various beauties ; and am very far from changing my opinion : but I told you that the impression of this piece has produced its usual effect, and has brought forth a *civil demur* againſt excessive applause. I, who have read it again with pleasure, suppose that the critics are routed, as M. d'Aiguebonne will be with his *demur*, if the Chevalier has time to press the point. The victory of the grand council has been brilliant and gratifying, and I doubt not that it will give you ample satisfaction ; I am

impatient to receive your letter upon this subject. M. de Lamoignon told me again to-day, that this advantage, gained sword in hand, was greater than we supposed. I told him he was mistaken, as we had felt the pleasure in its fullest extent. He is very much engaged in the great cause between Mademoiselle, the Prince, and the whole House of Lorraine, who have recourse to law in the same way we have ; M. de Lamoignon is to plead on Thursday, and the affair will be determined upon hearing.

Your son's letter will give you pleasure, as it appears to come from a man who is happy, and who has his profession at heart. The King is so well pleased with M. de Castries, that he has made him brigadier ; this is the right method of proceeding ; rewards given at the moment they are deserved receive an additional value, they excite and encourage emulation. His Majesty told Cardinal de Bonzi,[1] that, as he had no share in this favour, he ought not to thank him for it.

The King of England set sail on the 17th, and arrived in Ireland on the 19th. Little Mailly, who accompanied him to Brest, is returned. Adieu, my beloved child ; I dread an increase of distance from you ; it makes me ill. I swallow this journey like a dose of medicine ; but the worst is, that I have no time to lose ; in truth, my reflections are often of the most melancholy cast ; for, though I submit to that Providence which separates us, what would become of me, if I had not the hope of seeing you again ?

LETTER CLXXXIV

To the Same

Rennes, Wednesday, May 18, 1689.

Thank God, my dear child, you have been bled, for I acknowledge this has very much delighted me ; I am anxious

[1] Uncle of the Marquis de Castries.

to know whether your head has been relieved by it. Madame de Chaulnes, after having embraced the beautiful Countess, informs her that like her she has an uneasy sensation in her legs, which does but ill agree with the gravity of the places in which God has put you both ; and if you find yourself well from being bled, she desires you will inform her. Let her know, then, my dearest child, for I shall be glad to find that my blood has not been spilt unnecessarily.

We have laughed heartily at your entreaty at the close of your letter, that I would take medicine ; and, in fact, I was just preparing to take the powder and the Capuchin's manna, but without any necessity, except the probable effects of Lent, and the length of time since I have taken any. So, I have been operated upon in one way as you have been in another ; I find myself quite well after it. I had visitors in the evening, M. and Madame de Chaulnes, Madame de Kerman, M. de Rennes, M. de St. Malo, M. de Revel, Tonquedec, and several other illustrious Bretons, male and female. I fancy I see you when I look at Madame de Chaulnes, conducting yourself well to all, the proper distinctions being justly observed ; for everything is measured, though natural and familiar. " I dine in one camp, and sup in another "[1] ; that is, in the morning with my dear hostess,[2] and at night at the Hôtel de Chaulnes. The Duke is constantly employed, sending away troops, and lodging them ; nothing but reviews, drums beating, soldiers, regiments, and officers ; two tables, one consisting of eighteen covers, and the other of ten. Everything is splendid, as the Chevalier says, and " Everything flies like a ferryboat with the cable cut." Madame de Chaulnes thanked me for this comparison, and said to me in a whisper, " If I had children I would not act thus." We shall go on Monday to the Rocks, to rest ourselves a little ; my son is quite impatient to be there, his wife ought to be there, and I pant for the woods of the Rocks. We shall say that our return will be speedy ; God will direct our thoughts and our designs. I have just been reading a pretty letter that Mademoiselle Descartes has written me ; let Paulina

[1] This is a line from a song of Blot's, made during the wars of the Fronde.
[2] Madame de Marbœuf.

answer it for you, and do honour to M. Descartes and to religion; as a miracle is absolutely necessary, it is easy to introduce it as you shall find occasion. I sometimes laugh at my friendship for Mademoiselle Descartes ; I naturally turn to her, I have always something to say to her ; she seems to me to be related to you, on her father's side [1] ; and thence, perhaps, I borrow a small portion from my dear daughter. Adieu, my beloved child ; take care of yourself and remember that I am in perfect health. Paulina now writes a pretty hand, but for you it would have been a vile scrawl ; this is not the only good you will do her. I am grieved to think, I did not nurse the Chevalier in his last illness ; I fancy he is going to follow your advice, and that of M. de Louvois ; he is preparing for the waters, and he will do well. Our Marquis still conducts himself admirably.

M. de Lavardin [2] is set out from Rome on his return ; you will have Avignon a long while.

LETTER CLXXXV

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 22, 1689.

Ah ! what a beautiful procession ! [3] How holy ! How magnificent ! How suitable are the demonstrations of respect ! How well adapted all the external parts of it, in comparison of your profanations at Aix,[4] with your *Prince of Love*,[5] and

[1] Madame de Grignan used to call Descartes her father.

[2] He was Ambassador extraordinary at Rome, from whence he was recalled, after having received many insults from Pope Innocent XI with regard to the franchises, and other complaints of the Court of France against that of Rome.

[3] The procession at Avignon on the day of the Fête Dieu.

[4] The indecency of the procession exhibited at Aix the same day is carried to extravagance. This procession was instituted by René d'Anjou, King of Naples and Sicily, Count de Provence, who regulated the cavalcade and ceremony. A satire upon this subject may be seen in a little Latin work under the title of *Querela ad Gassendum.*

[5] The Prince of Love is now omitted.

paper horses ![1] What a difference ! I am ſtruck with the beauty of this cavalcade, to which is added military music. The perfumes ſcattered ſo opportunely, the noble and reſpectful manner of ſaluting you ; M. de Grignan's good looks, which are ſo well ſuited to theſe occaſions, in ſhort, the whole ceremony affects and pleaſes me. This is the place for the blue ribbon ; this ornament is intended for perſons of M. de Grignan's birth and ſtation ; and you ſay truly that the oſtentation of modeſt men does not offend the pride of others ; becauſe it is neither oſtentation nor pride, and juſtice is done to real merit. I own, my dear child, that in the midſt of all this clamour, the communion ſurpriſed me ; it is ſo ſhort a time ſince Whitſuntide, that your public ſituation perhaps makes theſe demonſtrations neceſſary ; for otherwiſe, I ſhould not ſuppoſe you more pious than St. Louis, who communicated only five times in a year. La Chaiſe [2] was aſked with ſome aſperity, where he met with this circumſtance ; he ſhowed a manuſcript of one of the almoners of that King, which is in His Majeſty's library. In ſhort, my child, you know your religion and your duty better than anyone ; this a noble ſcience.

You are now at Grignan ; I hope you will ſleep better there than at Avignon, where you could not find time for reſt. I have indeed ſerious fears for your health. I am very deſirous of knowing when the Chevalier is to ſet out for Balaruc. M. d'Arles intends going to Forges ; does he ſtill perſevere in obtaining the civil petition ? M. Baron, one of your judges, is dead ; this is a reaſon why you ſhould not let this petition languiſh ; it is true that death interferes everywhere ſo indiſcriminately that there is no building upon anything. You ſaid well, " Shall we never lay aſide the cuſtom of attaching ourſelves to theſe wretched mortals ? " Ah, it is very imprudent ! And yet by what chains are we not riveted. You have made me laugh, by talking to me in a ſtyle I am perfectly acquainted with, of following Madame Cornuel ſtep by ſtep, for I ſee and hear you; if health can furniſh ſuch hopes,

[1] There are men in the procession who dance about on paſteboard horses, who appear like a new species of Centaurs.

[2] John Filleau de la Chaise, author of a life of St. Louis, much eſteemed.

I may possess them ; but God knows I desire nothing more than his will ; the futility of wishes should always recall us to this submission. I still lead the quiet tranquil life I have described to you, without restraint, in good society, and, occasionally, engaged in walking and reading ; your time at Avignon is passed in a very different manner, but agreeably to the difference of our destinites. My son will set out on Sunday for Rennes, where he is to keep a good table ; and this, perhaps, is the only warfare that will be carried on. M. and Madame de Chaulnes are at St. Malo, they wish very much to see me. It seems we are no longer so much terrified as we were at the Prince of Orange, and perhaps these regiments of nobility, for we must speak with propriety, will not march farther than Rennes ; so that all the blows will fall upon your poor brother. I tenderly embrace my dearest Countess, and think I am saying a great many things to the Chevalier. Ah, he is really at Grignan ! He is no longer confined to that little apartment ! He sees you, converses with you ! How happy he is in my opinion, notwithstanding his indisposition ! I had written to Mademoiselle de Méri on her brother's illness [1] ; she informs me that since the arrival of the brother de la Charité, he is much better ; that his animal spirits are again in motion, that he has recovered his feeling in his legs, and that he is coming to Paris in a litter.

Mademoiselle Descartes is charmed with the beauty and excellence of your understanding ; she thinks Brittany unworthy of seeing your letter, except one very amiable man, whom she calls her master, and who admires you beyond anything he ever before admired. It is true that your letter is a perfect composition, and written in a style that does not savour of the dust of philosophy.

[1] The Marquis de la Trousse.

LETTER CLXXXVI

To the Same

The Rocks, Sunday, October 2, 1689.

It will be a year to-morrow since I saw you, embraced you, heard you speak, and left you at Charenton. Good heavens, what a lively remembrance I have of that day ; and how I long for another, that may be distinguished by seeing you again, embracing you, and clinging to you for ever ! Why cannot I thus end my life with the person who has wholly occupied it ? This is what I feel, and what I tell you, my dear child, without intending it, to commemorate the end of this year of separation.

After this I must tell you that your last letter is so gay, so sprightly, has so much of the *currente calamo* in it, that it charms me because it is impossible to think and write so pleasantly without being in good spirits and in good health. Let us first talk of the Chevalier ; I think his situation must be much improved since I saw him. What ! I might see him stamp with his right foot! As to the left, it still kept the field with glory, though it was sometimes humbled by the state of its colleague, which mortified us equally. In truth, nothing but a miracle could have restored him the use of his right foot ; for he was almost as lame as M. de la Rochefoucauld, which was quite deplorable ; and this change is effected by three-quarters of an hour's bathing for three successive days, in these salutary waters : neither Mont-d'Or nor Barege could have done as much. In three days, then, we are free. Assure the Chevalier of the sincere joy I feel from the relief he has derived from these charming waters, till we can pronounce the word *cured*. You pay a high compliment to M. de Carcassonne's solicitude, in comparing it with yours for me ; I can easily conceive that none can be more affectionate or consolatory. The Chevalier, then, thinks Madame de Ganges [1] greatly altered ; this is odd ; she was really much to

[1] Sister-in-law to the unfortunate Madame de Ganges. The name of this lady was Gevaudan.

blame not to answer to the idea he had formed of her. I have sometimes seen a likeness to that beautiful model, but a hundred thousand degrees below it; for, besides her features, so many things are wanting, with respect to manner, grace, and what constitutes beauty, that the resemblance dwindles to nothing. If I had known she had been the wife of my Ganges, whom I have so often seen, I should have viewed her, perhaps, through a different medium; but the deed is done.

Let us talk of Madame de Montbrun; good heavens, with what spirit do you paint this woman! Your brother is delighted with the portrait, but he will not tell you so, he only embraces you. He is with his honest friend; and it is I who have to thank you for having left everything, and flown with such impetuosity to describe this woman, who is really an original: full of her noble ancestry, which she traces as far back as the Flood, and which occupies her mind entirely; all her Guelph and Ghibelin relations, friends and enemies, with whom you fill your page inimitably, with the greatest humour and drollery; her reveries, in calling the Marquis d'Huxelles her enemy, when she certainly means the Germans; the crowns with which she decorates and entrenches herself; her astonishment at seeing your natural complexion; her fancying you have neglected yourself, in showing the natural colour of your veins and skin; that you ought to paint your face; and because you display the complexion God has given you, you appear to her quite neglected and undressed. Messieurs de Grignan are very clever in thinking hers a natural complexion: this shows the discernment of men, they neither know what they see nor what they say; I have met with those who have even admired inferior beauties.

You have taken a pretty trip to Saint Esprit, you have seen M. de Baville, the terror of Languedoc; you have also seen M. de Broglio.[1] I consider our Revel as the *Cesar*, and Broglio *the neglected Laridon*.[2] Has not the Chevalier seen them both in the chains of Mademoiselle de Bouchet? Broglio was so furious

[1] Victor Maurice, Count de Broglio, commanded in Languedoc; he was brother of Charles Amedeus de Broglio, Count de Revel.

[2] See La Fontaine's fable upon Education, Fab. 165.

a lover, that he was one cause of her throwing herself into the Carmelites.

I must add, my dear child, that we are no longer angry with our good governors, at which I am delighted ; I was almost in despair in thinking them to blame. It is certain, and all our friends agree, that the Duke could not say a syllable to the King, neither on the subject of Brittany nor the deputation, without great impropriety ; Rome occupied everything. He spoke to M. de Lavardin, and wrote to Marshal d'Estrées : Madame de Chaulnes has said all that could be said to M. de Croissy ; and nothing can be more evident than the pleasure they would have had in succeeding ; but we think no more of it, and if by accident we should obtain it, we shall consider it as a miracle. This is not the greatest evil that arises to me from the death of the Pope ; I am really grieved when I reflect upon the loss you will sustain by this event.

I thank you, my child, for making me so completely one of the members of your society, by informing me of what passes in it : nothing is so dear to me as what comes from you and your family. I recommend to you the care of your health, and the preservation of your youth, and not without reason. I laugh with you at M. de Grignan's gout : this is a fine consolation to a man in pain ; but everything is preferable to the colic. God bless you all ; my compliments, remembrances, and caresses, where they are due : you know your own share, my dear child ; it is my entire self.

LETTER CLXXXVII

To the Same

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 30, 1689.

How much I am obliged to you for having sent me M. de Saint Pouanges's letter ! It is a pleasure to see, really to see, an attestation of the wisdom and merit of our Marquis, formed expressly for this age ; you are not forgotten in it : I am

delighted at having read this letter, and I return it you with a thousand thanks. I have no doubt that you will be allowed to sell the Marquis's company, and I wait for this joyful event.

I always interest myself in what concerns the Chevalier ; not because he amuses himself with reading and liking my letters ; on the contrary, I take the liberty of laughing at him for this ; but because his head is very well turned, and agrees wonderfully well with his heart : but how is it, since he is fond of this kind of reading, that he does not give himself the pleasure of perusing your letters before you send them ? They are truly worthy of his attention. When I show them to my son and his wife, we feel their beauty. My friend Guébriac saw the passage respecting La Montbrun the other day ; it very much surprised him ; it was a lively and amusing picture. In short, my child, it is fortunate that my letters please you ; how often otherwise would you be tired ! M. de Grignan has not, then, lent me his assistance in that, where I spoke of the masterly stroke of having deprived the Pope-maker of the nomination of deputies for the governor of Brittany. I am sure that neither the Chevalier nor you could fail to be convinced of the truth of what I said : that blood which circulates so warmly in the Chevalier's veins could not be frozen with regard to the interests of great lords and governors of provinces. I also hope that he has adopted my sentiments upon the ill-judged pride of the Archbishopric of Arles, for the Archbishop is out of the question, but I perhaps flatter myself in vain upon these occasions : I should, however, like this ingenuousness, if united to so many good things, and, if it were in my favour, I should be quite proud of it. Let us now talk of his gout and fever ; they seem to reign alternately, the gout in the room of fever, the fever in the room of gout ; he may choose ; and I am of your opinion, that the reigning power is always the most disagreeable ; in short, it is a great misfortune that such a man should be obliged to keep his bed.

So, then, you were struck with an expression of Madame de la Fayette's, blended with so much friendship.[1] Though I say to myself that this is a truth which should not be forgotten, I

[1] This expression was " You are old ".

confess I was all astonishment at it ; for I yet feel no sort of decay that puts me in mind of it. I cannot, however, refrain from calculating and reflecting, and I find that the conditions of life are very hard. It seems to me that I have been dragged against my will to the fatal period when *old age* must be endured ; I see it, I have attained it ; and I would, at least, contrive not to go beyond it, not to advance in the road of infirmities, pain, loss of memory, *disfigurements* which are ready to lay hold of me ; and I hear a voice which says, You must go on, in spite of yourself, or, if you will not, you must die, an alternative at which nature recoils. Such, however, is the fate of those who have reached a certain period : but a return to the will of God, and to that universal law which is imposed upon us restores reason to its place and makes us call in patience to our aid. Summon it also, my dearest child ; and let not your too affectionate heart excite you to shed tears which reason must condemn.

I had no great difficulty in refusing the offer of my friends ; I had only to answer them, *Paris is in Provence*, as you said, *Paris is in Brittany*, but it is extraordinary that you should feel it in the same way I did. Paris, then, is so truly in Provence with respect to me that I would not this year be anywhere else than where I am. *Passing the winter at the Rocks* sounds terrific : alas ! my child, it is the most agreeable thing in the world. I sometimes laugh, and say, This, then, is what is called passing a winter in the woods. Madame de Coulanges said to me the other day, Leave your *damp* Rocks ! *Damp* ! I replied : you are damp, if you please ; Brévanes is damp, but we are upon an eminence ; you might as well say, Your damp Montmartre. When the sun shines it penetrates on every side into these woods ; it is a dry soil, exposed to the direct rays of the meridian sun, so that the most delicate constitution could not take cold, and the setting sun has a fine effect from the end of a long grove. When it rains we have a good room, a good fire, and two card-tables : this is now the case, as we have a good deal of company who do not interrupt me, for I do as I please ; when we have none we are still better off, as reading affords a pleasure superior to every other. Madame de Marbœuf is very good ; she enters

into our taſte ; but she will not always be with us. I wished to tell you this, that your friendship might be at reſt.

My daughter-in-law is delighted with what you say of her ; I make no secret of it, and she desires me to say everything that is kind and grateful, in return for the praises you beſtow on her. M. Courtin's friendship for you claims many from me ; he is an important friend, and not afraid of speaking on your behalf ; but this is not a very proper time to requeſt favours and gratifications, when considerable augmentations are asked on every side. Tell me what pensions are retrenched ; not, I truſt M. de Grignan's, or a Menin's ? If so, I shall be in despair. You will see M. du Plessis ; he has written to me, and gives me to underſtand that his domeſtic plan does not succeed ; and that inſtead of being comfortable and independent, as he expected, he has thought of nothing but quitting his house ; so that he will be with M. de Vins, in Provence, for two months. He will relate his griefs to you ; he seems to have been taken in with reſpect to intereſt ; I am very sorry for it ; tell me what you learn from him. You certainly ought to send me M. de Grignan's speech ; as he is satisfied with it, I shall be ſtill more so. Tell him how I summoned him to my aid, and upon what occasion. You spare me very much in your letters, I am aware of it ; you pass lightly over things that are unpleasant, but I feel them as much as you do. It is a great comfort that the Chevalier is with you ; he is the only person in whom you can confide, and the only one that can be more affected than yourself at what concerns you ; he knows how worthy I am to talk with him upon this subject : we are so much in the same intereſt that a natural union muſt necessarily subsiſt between us. A thousand kindnesses to my dear Paulina ; I have a very good opinion of her little sprightliness, and her curtseys : you love her, you amuse yourself with her ; this delights me ; she answers your queſtions very humorously. Good heavens ! my dear child, when will the time come that I shall see and embrace you, and that dear child also ? I long for this period ; I will inform you of the firſt proſpect I have of it.

LETTER CLXXXVIII

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan

The Rocks, Saturday for Sunday, Christmas Day.

I wish you a happy Christmas, and that you may be more just to me next year than you have been at the close of this. How can you suppose I can guess at M. de la Garde's situation, unless you acquaint me with it? It is only three days since I learned that he no longer enjoys the pension of 8,000 livres; I told you it grieved and surprised me. To-day you add that his estate which produced 10,000 livres, now brings him in but 2,000; this makes a great difference. How could I conceive any such drawback when I always saw the Chevalier remit him such considerable sums upon the score of his pension? I did not know they were diminished; I thought his estate altogether was worth 10,000 livres a year, and considering the little expense at which he lived, I said he was a rich man, quite at his ease; he might, therefore, very easily have lent my daughter some money to pay her friend the Chevalier de Grignan; this thought was neither unjust nor ridiculous, ignorant as I was of what had happened to this poor man. This is the medium through which things appeared to me, thinking favourably of your estates in Provence, compared with ours. It must have been folly and injustice itself to have said what you reproach me with if I had known what I learn only by your last two letters; they, indeed, have very much changed my opinion; I am now only affected on account of the part I take in such afflicting circumstances, and with deserved admiration at so much courage and resignation to the will of God. You describe to me a true saint, the most Christian-like virtue, which greatly increases the esteem I always entertained for him. Never was there such devotion as his, and if I am fortunate enough to see him some day it will give me true pleasure; but, once more, how could I guess? You had even represented him so uneasy as to want

to sell his estate ; in fine I should have deserved to be scolded more than I can express, if I had written as I did after knowing what you have just told me. You did not date your letters regularly ; you imagined the feathered tribe had been the bearers of your last letters, or you forgot how distant we were from each other. Do me justice therefore and believe that I would not so much have wronged M. de la Garde's virtue and situation. I take this opportunity to wish him the compliments of the season, and to assure him of the continuance of my ancient friendship ; it is a long time since I said anything particular to him. I think you happy in being able to afford him consolation in his retreat, as he does to you. I thought he was almost always at La Garde ; I can easily suppose his company is agreeable ; but when you tell me that you like bad company better than none, and that you wish your house were full, you are quite unintelligible.

Your account of the Chevalier's gout greatly excites my pity. The waters of Balaruc, then, have afforded him no relief ? This is melancholy, indeed ; I wish him a portion of M. de la Garde's resignation ; tell him how much I am grieved at his situation. Inform me of the state of your health ; I passed too lightly over the colic which made you keep your bed ; is this the colic that is not dangerous, though painful ? Coulanges has written the same nonsense to me that he has to you ; and I have approved that upon his marrying Paulina he should restore to your family the fine estate of Avignon, which you have so long possessed ; how pleasant it would have been to you for eight or ten years longer ! It is said that the Pope wishes the King to notify publicly that he disavows the assembly of eighty-two, at which two Grignans assisted, and where infallibility was mentioned ; this would be a strange affair. This news does not come from the Abbé Bigorré ; I long to receive his letters. The Hôtel de Rochefoucauld is half burnt down ; the grand apartment, with many goods and papers, are destroyed. Madame de Lavardin is very much grieved at the accident, and she also tells me that Madame de la Fayette is seized with such a violent colic and pain in her side that she is an object of compassion ; her health is in a deplorable state.

I consider M. de la Trousse to be in a very bad way, let people say what they please.

I salute and embrace M. de Grignan ; it is long since I saw him. He could not do less than pay a visit to his *Alcina* in her enchanted castle. I wish she may spend the winter there, that he may have no regret at Aix. We are here alone, with charming books, which afford us so much pleasure that I cannot help pitying your want of taste for reading ; for I must tell you, my dear child, that you are not fond of reading, and that your son inherits this distaste from you : I tell you this in revenge for what you said to me.

When your son is at Paris and Versailles, he will salute the King, all the Ministers, and the whole Court. Whatever esteem I entertain for him, I could wish him an uncle only for this first winter ; I praise him for his docility ; he had written to us very prettily on the pleasure he naturally feels at saying, *my regiment* ; in fact, such a station is highly agreeable at eighteen years of age. I pay my compliments to M. de Grignan, as he is the source of the promotion, by sending him to make the first campaign of Philippsburg. Tell me something of that dear Count, whom I have claimed in my letters, and who has abandoned me. Will not your dear son pay you a visit ? Let me know when you have sold your company. My son desires to be remembered to you affectionately ; he is an admirable and indefatigable reader, never being tired of fine writing, though he has read it over and over again. Your sister-in-law has a *souris*,[1] which goes very well in her black hair ; what a whim ! but I think it would be a greater one to write any longer ; we ought to think of conscience, read M. le Tourneux, and recollect ourselves.

[1] The name of a fashion.

LETTER *CLXXXIX

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges, at Rome

The Rocks, January 8, 1690.

What a melancholy date, my amiable cousin compared with yours ! It suits a recluse, like me ; and that of Rome suits one whose fate is to wander uncontrolled, and " who stalks his idleness from one end of the world to the other ". What a happy life ! And how mildly has Fortune treated you, as you say, notwithstanding her quarrel with you ! Always beloved, always esteemed, always carrying joy and pleasure along with you, always the favourite of, and fascinated with, some friend of consequence, a Duke, a Prince, or a Pope, for I will add the holy father by way of novelty ; always in good health, never at the charge of anyone, no business, no ambition ; but, above all, the advantage of not growing old ! This is the height of felicity. You doubt sometimes whether you are not advancing, by certain calculations of time and years ; but old age is still at a distance : you do not approach it with horror, as some persons I could name ; this is reserved for your neighbour, and you have not even the fears that are usually felt at seeing a fire in your neighbourhood. In short, after mature reflection, I pronounce you the happiest man in the world. This last journey to Rome is, in my opinion, the most delightful adventure that could have happened to you, with an adorable Ambassador (the Duke de Chaulnes) on a noble and grand occasion ; and a visit to the beautiful mistress of the world, whom, having once seen, we are always longing to see again. I very much like the verses you have made on her ; she cannot be too highly celebrated. I am sure my daughter will approve them ; they are well written, and poetical : we sing them. I am delighted with what you tell me of Paulina, whom you saw at Grignan on your way ; I have judged most

favourably of her from your praises, and the unaffected letter you wrote to Madame de Chaulnes, which she has sent to me. Oh, how much I should like to take a journey to Rome, as you propose ! but then it must be with the face and air I had many years ago, and not with those I now have. A woman, particularly, should not move her old bones except to be Ambassadress. I believe that Madame de Coulanges, though still young, is of the same opinion ; but in my youth I should have been in raptures at such an adventure : it is not the same with you ; everything becomes you : enjoy, then, the privilege, and the jealousy you excite, to know who shall be favoured with you. I will not waste my time in arguing with you on the present state of affairs ; all the Duke's prosperities have given me real joy : you fear precisely what all his friends apprehend, that, being the only one who can fill the place he holds with equal success and reputation, he will be kept in it too long. This apartment in your new palace creates new alarms ; but let us do better, let us not anticipate evils : rather let us hope that everything will happen as we wish, and that we shall all meet again at Paris. I was delighted with your remembrance, your letter, and your songs ; write to me whenever it is agreeable and convenient : I take the liberty of sending this by the Ambassadress ; and I do more, my dear cousin, for under her protection I take the liberty of embracing my dear Governor of Brittany, and his Excellency the Ambassador, with real affection, and without offence to respect : these high dignities do not intimidate me. I am sure he still loves me ; God bless him, and bring him back again ; these are my wishes for the New Year. Adieu, my dear cousin, I embrace you ; continue to love me, I wish it, it is my whim, and to love you more than you love me : but you are very amiable, and I must not place myself on a par with you.

LETTER CXC

From Madame de Sévigne to Madame de Grignan

The Rocks, Sunday, January 15, 1690.

You are right, I cannot reconcile myself to the date of this year ; it has, however, been already begun for some time ; and you will find that, let us pass it as we may, we shall soon find the bottom of the bag that contained the thousand livres.[1]

You really spoil me, and so do my Paris friends ; the sun has scarcely gained upon us a barleycorn before you tell me when you shall expect me at Grignan ; and my friends desire me to fix from that hour the time of my departure, in order to hasten their joy. Such pressing civilities flatter me highly and particularly yours, which admit of no comparison. I will, then, sincerely confide to my dear Countess that between this and September, I cannot entertain a thought of leaving this country ; this is the time when I send my little means to Paris, of which only a very small part is gone. This is the time when the Abbé Charier is treating for my fines and sales, which amount to ten thousand livres ; but more of this hereafter ; let us content ourselves with driving away every hope of taking the least step before the time I have mentioned. I will not, however, say that you are my goal, my perspective ; you know it well, and that you are so firmly rooted in my heart, that I fear M. Nicole would find much difficulty to prune you away ; this, in short, is my disposition. You use the most affectionate expression possible to me, in hoping you may never see the end of the happy years you wish me. We are very far from agreeing in our wishes ; for I have informed you of a very just and very proper truth, which God will, doubtless, grant, and which is to follow the natural order of Providence ; this is my comfort through the thorny road of old age : mine is a rational feeling, and yours too extraordinary and too kind a one.

[1] Madame de Sévigné compared the twelve months of the year to a bag with a thousand livres, which is exhausted almost as soon as it is opened.

I shall pity you when M. de la Garde and the Chevalier are no longer with you ; they are excellent companions ; but they have their reasons, and that of bringing to life the pension of a man who is not dead appears to me very important. You will have your child with you, who will suit his station at Grignan very prettily ; he must for various reasons meet a kind reception there, and you will, no doubt, heartily embrace him. He has written me another charming letter to wish me a happy new year. He appears quite forlorn at Keyserslauter : he says nothing prevents his coming to Paris, but waiting for orders from Provence ; that this is the main-spring which sets him in motion. You seem to make him wait a long while ; his letter is dated the second instant, and I supposed him at Paris ; let him go there and after having made his appearance, let him fly to embrace you. This little man seems to me qualified for a good match, and if you should find one for him you may easily obtain His Majesty's permission for the reversion of your noble post in his favour. You find that his disposition and Paulina's are very dissimilar ; they must necessarily, however, both be possessed of certain qualities of the heart, temper is another consideration. I am delighted that the Marquis's sentiments please you ; I could wish him a greater taste for the sciences and reading, but this may come in time. As to Paulina, that devourer of books, I had rather she should swallow bad ones, than have no love for reading ; romances, plays, Voiture, Sarrasin, have all been exhausted ; has she dipped into Lucian ? Is she capable of enjoying *Les Petites Lettres ?* History should come next, and if she does not find her account in this I pity her. If she does not like the finest works of devotion, so much the worse for her, for we know but too well that even without devotion ourselves, they are charming. With respect to ethics, as she would not make so good a use of it as you I would not have her meddle either with Montaigne, Charron, or any others of his stamp ; she is too young. The true morality of this age is what we learn in conversation, fables, history, and example. If you were to bestow a little of your time upon her in conversation, she would reap greater benefit from this than from all the rest. I know not whether what I say is

worth your reading. I am very far from being wedded to my opinion.

You ask me if I am still a little devotee, of little worth ; indeed I am, and to my regret am nothing more. All my goodness consists in knowing my religion, and its signification ; I cannot be imposed upon by false for true religion ; I separate the shadow from the substance. I hope I am not mistaken in this, and that God, having already endowed me with good sentiments, will continue them to me ; past favours, in some measure, guarantee me for those to come ; so that I live in confidence, blended, however, with some fear. But I must scold you for saying our Corbinelli *is the devil's mystic* ; your brother is bursting with laughter, and I scold him as well as you. How ! *the devil's mystic ?* A man who thinks of nothing but destroying the empire of the devil ; who constantly attaches himself to his foes, the saints of the church ; a man who sets no value upon his body, who endures poverty with a *Christian*, or what you would call *philosophic*, resignation ; who never omits celebrating the perfections and existence of God ; who never judges his neighbour, but always excuses him ; who passes his life in the exercise of charity and usefulness, insensible to pleasure and the enjoyments of life ; who, in short, notwithstanding his ill fortune, is wholly resigned to the will of God ! And this you call being *the devil's mystic !* You must own, that this is not the portrait of our poor friend ; the expression, nevertheless, carries with it an air of pleasantry which at first excites a laugh and may surprise the ignorant. But I resist, as you see, and support the faithful admirer of Saint Theresa, of my grandmother, and the fortunate Jean de la Croix.[1] Now I mention Corbinelli, he wrote me a very pretty note the other day, giving me an account of a conversation and a dinner at M. de Lamoignon's ; the performers were the host, M. de Troyes, M. de Toulon, Father Bourdaloüe, his companion, Despréaux, and Corbinelli. The subject was the works of the ancients and moderns ; Despréaux was an advocate for

[1] A Spanish priest, the intimate friend of St. Theresa, so sublime a theologian and spiritualist that it was considered extreme vanity in his translator to have pretended to understand him.

the ancients, with one single exception in favour of a modern ; who, in his opinion, surpassed both the old and the new. Bourdaloüe's friend, who presumed a great deal, and had joined Despréaux and Corbinelli, asked him what writer it was who held so distinguished a rank in his judgment ! Despréaux would not say. Corbinelli joined with the Jesuit, and earnestly entreated Despréaux to name his author, that he might read him night and day. Despréaux answered smiling : " Ah, sir, you have read him more than once, I am sure." The Jesuit resumed with a disdainful air, *un cotal riso amaro* (a bitter smile), and pressed Despréaux still more closely to name this wonderful author. Despréaux said : " Father, do not press me." The Father persisted. At length Despréaux took him by the arm and squeezing him very hard said to him : " Well, father, since you will know it is Pascal." " Pascal ! " said the Father, reddening with astonishment, " Pascal is clever as far as falsehood can be so." " Falsehood ! " resumed Despréaux, " falsehood ! Know that his work is as true as it is inimitable ; it has lately been translated into three different languages." The Father replied : " This does not make him a man of more veracity." Despréaux was heated, and exclaimed like a madman, " What, Father, will you say of one of your brethren having published in one of his books that *a Christian is not obliged to love God ?* [1] Dare you say this is false ? " " Sir," said the Father, in a rage, " you should discriminate." " Discriminate ! " said Despréaux, " discriminate ! zounds, discriminate ! Discriminate, whether we are obliged to love God or not ! " And taking Corbinelli by the arm, flew to the other end of the apartment ; then returned, and walked to and fro like a man distracted, but without approaching the holy father, and at length joined the company in the dining-room ; here the scene ends, and the curtain drops. Corbinelli has promised me the remainder when we meet ; but being convinced that you will

[1] This is one of the famous disputes which Despréaux is said to have supported in more places than one, upon the subject of the love of God, and was, perhaps the first that gave rise to his idea of the epistle to the Abbé Renaudot which he did not write till 1695. See *Ep.* xii of Despréaux, and 10th of the *Provincial Letters.*

find this scene as humorous as I did, I send it you, and if you read it in a good humour, I am sure you will be pleased.

I am informed that several Duchesses and great ladies have been enraged that, though at Versailles, they were not at the supper on Twelfth-night ; these are what are called miseries. You know the other news better than I do. I have sent Bigorré's note to Guébriac, who returns you a thousand thanks ; he is satisfied with your Court of Love. I consider Paulina very clever in being able to play at chess ; I am afraid she would hold me in contempt if she knew how much this game is beyond my capacity.

[*Passage from M. de Sévigné omitted.*]

LETTER *CXCI

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

The Rocks, February 5, 1690.

This date will at first sight present to you a solitude and a desert. My son and his wife spend a considerable portion of their time here : they have both very good sense. It was here your letter (of the 6th of January) found me. But, my dear cousin, before I tell you what I am doing here, I must begin with the church, and I return a thousand thanks to our Prelate [1] for the honour of his remembrance. I truly felt it : I had often thought of him ; I even said so to the Abbé de Roquette, who came to our states ; but I stopped there, and, finding myself too distant to make myself understood, I contented myself with carefully preserving in my heart the sentiments of esteem and respect which are invariably felt for him by all who have the honour of knowing him. In this disposition his name met my eye on opening your letter. I leave you to judge, sir, what joy and what gratitude I felt at his precious remembrance. After our Prelate has seen this part of my letter, I conclude he will

[1] The Bishop of Autun.

not have time to attend to the rest of it, and that being now in his closet, attending to his own affairs, I may talk to you with my usual freedom. I see no one with you but Madame de Toulongeon, and my niece, who do not deter me. I think you are in excellent company, and in such society there is no subject you might not discuss as well as in Paris. We have sometimes also very good conversations here. I came into this country, as you know, with Madame de Chaulnes, ten months ago. I was often with her at Rennes, and she took me on a very pleasant excursion into Lower Brittany. It was there the Duke de Chaulnes received an order from the King, to repair immediately to Court, and afterwards to Rome. This overturned all our plans of going to see the fleet at Brest. We returned very melancholy to Rennes, and on the 20th August they set out for Paris. Madame de Chaulnes came here to take leave of me, where she slept, and quitted me with real sorrow. I had hoped to return with her as I came, but Providence had arranged otherwise.

You know the rest of what concerns the journey to Rome : I was left here with part of my family in a charming house in the midst of my business, for I have two estates in this country. I have gained nothing by the raising of money ; I had no plate to dispose of. The beautiful Madelonne is at her seat in Provence, and I am very quietly in this. I think I shall return to Paris towards the end of the summer. This is my mode of life, and my plan, God ruling over all. There is nothing I so earnestly desire as to be religious, and occupied with the only important work we all have to do. We have excellent books ; but I own, that though my mind is thoroughly convinced of this great truth, my heart is not affected as I could wish it to be, and this state makes us feel how necessary to us is the grace of God. I am inclined to end here, my dear cousin ; can I stop at a better place ? Every subject would appear frivolous after this. I trust, however, that the good God will not be displeased at my adding a word respecting my friendship for you, which is unabated, and will last to the end of my life. I seem not to have sufficiently embraced the two amiable women who are at your side.

LETTER CXCII

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan

The Rocks, Sunday, February 19, 1690.

If you could see me, my dear child, you would order me to keep Lent, and, finding that I had no ailments, you would be convinced, as I am, that God had bestowed so good a state of health upon me only to make me obey the commands of the Church. We live well here ; we have not, indeed, the River Sorgue [1] ; but we have the sea, so that we are in no want of fish. We have butter every week from Prévalaie ; I like it, and eat it as if I were a native of Brittany. We eat bread and butter often, and we always think of you when we do so ; my son marks all his teeth upon it, and what pleases me most is that I can leave the marks of all mine, too : we shall soon strew the slices with fine herbs and violets : at night we have pottage with a little butter, according to the custom of the country, good prunes and fine spinach ; in short, this is not fasting, and we say with confusion *it is very difficult to serve Holy Church !* But why do you find fault with milk in my coffee ? It is because you dislike milk ; for you would otherwise think it the most charming thing in the world. I drink it on Sunday mornings from choice ; you think to decry it in saying it is good to make a poor consumptive being just breathe : really, this is a high encomium, and if it makes a dying person breathe, it will make a healthy person live very agreeably. Here ends the chapter on Lent.

But a word on sermons ; how I pity you for being so often obliged to listen to such long insipid discourses ! This patience M. Nicole could never inspire me with, though he has written so good a treatise upon the subject. When I am as good as M. de la Garde, if ever God grants me this grace, I shall like all sermons ; in the meanwhile, I content myself with the

[1] The River Sorgue abounds in fish, and waters the county of Venaissin.

Gospels as explained by M. le Tourneux ; these are real sermons and nothing but the vanity of man could load modern discourses with their present contents. We sometimes read the homilies of St. John Chrysoſtom ; these are divine, and please us so highly that I perſiſt in not going to Rennes till Passion Week, to avoid being exposed to the eloquence of the preachers who hold forth in behalf of the Parliament. I recolleſt the rigid faſt you formerly observed on Shrove Tuesday, living solely upon self-love, with which you seasoned every sauce, except that which might have nourished you ; but even in this your vanity was deceived, for your face was covered with pimples from the heat of your blood ; you contemplated your own essence, like a pigeon in a pie ; what a ridiculous whim ! This was your reply to La Mousse, who said to you : " Mademoiselle, all these charms will decay." " Yes, sir, but they are not decayed yet." Good heavens, who could suppose that such a person could negleſt herself as you have done, and become so clever and excellent a woman ! We want now to give you some vanity, some regard for yourself : in this you are very deficient, while you possess too much for others. An equipage, horses, mules, subsiſtence ; in short, to live only from hand to mouth, and yet make such a considerable expense, without knowing where to find the sinews of war ; this, my child, can be done by no one but you : but I conjure you to think of Bourbilly ; here, perhaps, you may find some relief, after having in vain hoped for it elsewhere.

Madame de Chaulnes tells me that the Marquis is a fine fellow, that he is coming to see her : she does not think he will have time to go to Provence. I believe the company is sold ; I knew it before you. It is true, that your son is a ſtout lad, but he is not so dark as Boufflers ; I cannot bear the comparison, unless it be to run like him the race of good fortune. The Marquis should give you a more circumſtantial account of his firſt journey to Versailles ; it is this we want to know, and whether the King took any notice of him or spoke to him : it is upon such an occasion that a father or an uncle would have been of infinite service. I enclose my little note from the Abbé Bigorré ; it pleases us for his intelligence is more accurate

than that of others. If the women and courtiers who think M. de Chaulnes is a long while bringing about this pacification were informed of all that has been done these eighteen years againſt Rome, they would be of opinion that if the Ambaſſador ſucceed at laſt it muſt be a maſterpiece of addreſs and good fortune. There are fifteen or ſixteen chiefs, which our leiſure has made us acquainted with, and which are nearly of as much weight as thoſe who occaſioned the ſuppreſſion of the children of Madame de Mondonville.[1] M. de Grignan knows this; but you have not time to diſcuſs theſe trifles; it is more expeditious to cenſure, judge, and be impatient. Cardinal d'Eſtrées is arrived. I know not whether he will think proper to declare himſelf the Ambaſſador's antagoniſt; we ſhall ſee. He paſſed through Paris on his way to Verſailles, and ſent a gentleman to Madame de la Fayette; he is much her friend. The verſes of our Adhémar are very pretty; thoſe upon play are indifferent, but good, as you ſay, for *bouts rimés*. I ſend you ſome of La Scudéry's for Coulanges; what think you of them? They are ſaid to be the laſt ſhe will write, as ſhe is going gradually with M. de Montauſier.[2] It is proper to think of this journey, my dear child, after having lived ſo long; nothing prepares us ſo well for it as reading, and ſeeing an infinite number of perſons, younger than ourſelves, go firſt; in ſhort, it is the common deſtiny. But B . . .'s fate is whimſical, to be ruined by dint of uſury! The fall of our poor d'Harrouïs is much eaſier to comprehend; his paſſion was to please every-body, without bounds, and without reaſon; for it eclipſed every other paſſion, and even juſtice: this is another prodigy, but it is dying by a nobler ſword. You know M. du Bois's work, and your taſte is exquiſite. It confirms moſt fully the truth of our religion; I think it admirable. I have not yet got to the Mœurs de l'Egliſe[3]: I will not thank M. du Bois, he is too happy in obtaining your approbation; but I will thank M. de Grignan for his goodneſs in remaining with you and his delightful family. For my part, I am always with you, as I have told

[1] She founded the eſtabliſhment of female children, ſuppreſſed in 1656.
[2] Madame de Scudéry did not die till 1701; her age was ninety-four.
[3] Manners of the Church.

you ; and you constantly engage my thoughts in these woods, where the sun shines as in Provence, and where I read your letters over and over again, with so much pleasure.

LETTER *CXCIII

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

The Rocks, July 22, 1690.

I wish to write to you, my dear cousin, upon the battle gained by M. de Luxembourg[1] : it is a very natural subject. Do you not find that God always takes the part of the King ; and that nothing can give greater lustre to the fame of his arms, nor come more opportunely than this victory ? Such great news always occasions great anxiety to those who are interested or who fear they are so. The little Grignan, who was in M. de Bouffler's corps, may have been one of those who were detached to join M. de Luxembourg. I am also interested in two or three young persons. Till I have discovered what is become of them, my heart will beat a little, and then I have a general pity for all who have perished in this battle. I have been grieved for Villarceaux : there are some terrible circumstances attending his death. I also pity the poor mothers, Madame de Saucour and Madame de Cauvisson. The young widows I do not pity so much ; they will either be their own mistresses, or change their masters. I share in the King's honour and in the good effects of this intelligence spread over all Europe, which we shall feel in more places than one. I am the friend and servant of M. de Luxembourg and his sister,[2] to whom I have just written.

[1] The battle of Fleurus, near Charleroi, where the French defeated the Dutch army. Out of seven thousand prisoners, there were nine hundred officers. They took besides two hundred pairs of colours, the whole of the artillery and all the baggage. Notwithstanding this defeat, the Prince of Orange appeared again three months afterwards with an equally strong army.

[2] The Duchess de Meckelbourg, formerly the beautiful Châtillon, whose charms and favours had rendered more than one hero happy and guilty.

In short, my dear cousin, you see by what I have said, that I have not wanted employment for these four or five days ; and, indeed, these emotions are occasionally necessary in the country ; we should otherwise easily forget that we have a soul. The quiet we here enjoy is akin to lethargy. Thank God I am thoroughly revived, and never did Hungary-water produce a greater effect.

Tell me if your son was at this battle. He was in the number of the young men for whom I was interested. God has not conducted you, my dear cousin, through the most agreeable paths of life. They will be, however, more safe ; and, after all, life is a short journey. If we were wise, we should have but one concern in the world, that of our salvation. You have a perfect excellent friend, whom I honour and respect highly, who would not contradict me in this truth. It is useless to name him : I defy you to confound the Duke de Beauvilliers with the rest. I thank you, my dear niece, for your compliance. I thought we should not quarrel for a syllable more or less.

LETTER *CXCIV

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

Grignan, November 13, 1690.

When you see the date of this letter, my dear cousin, you will take me for a bird. I have passed courageously from Brittany into Provence. If my daughter had been at Paris I should have gone there ; but, knowing she would spend the winter in this beautiful country, I resolved to come and spend it with her, enjoy her fine sunshine, and return with her to Paris next year. I thought, after having given sixteen months to my son, that it was right to devote a few to my daughter ; and this plan, which appeared difficult to execute, was attended with very little trouble. I was three weeks upon the road, and upon the Rhône. I even took a few days of rest ; and, at length, I was received

by M. de Grignan and my daughter with such cordial affection, such true joy and gratitude that I thought I had not come far enough to see such excellent people; and found that the journey of a hundred and fifty leagues had not at all fatigued me. I will entertain you some day with an account of the grandeur of this house, and the beauty and magnificence of the furniture. I wished to inform you of my change of climate, that you might not write to me again at the Rocks, but here, where the mild heat of the sun makes me feel as if I should grow young again. We must not now neglect these little assistances, my dear cousin. I received your last letter before I left Brittany; but I was so overwhelmed with business that I deferred answering it till I came here. We heard the other day of the death of M. de Seignelai.[1] How young! How rich! How well established! Nothing was wanting to his happiness: splendour itself seems dead in him. In short, my dear cousin, death makes us all equal; it is there the happy await us. Death abates their joy, and thus comforts those who are not fortunate. A word of religion would not be amiss in this place; but I only wish to write a letter of friendship to my dear cousin, to ask how he does, and how his dear daughter is; to embrace them both with my whole heart; assure them of the esteem and respect of Madame de Grignan and her husband, who desire me to do so; and conjure them still to love me; it is not worth while to change after so many years.

LETTER *CXCV

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges

Grignan, April 10, 1691.

We have received a letter dated the 31st of March, from our dear Ambassador; it came in less than a week: this expedition

[1] He died of languor, at the age of thirty-nine. The French marine, which he had created, perished after him. Louvois died the following year; but the evils he had occasioned survived him.

is delightful, but what he tells us is still more so ; it is impossible to write in better spirits. My daughter takes upon herself to answer him, and as I desire her to send the Holy Ghost with all diligence not only to create a Pope,[1] but to put a speedy termination to business, that he may be able to pay us a visit. She assures me that she will send him word of the conquest of Nice, in five days after opening the trenches by M. de Catinet, and that this intelligence will produce the same effect for our bulls. Tell us, my dear cousin, if we judge rightly. We have received M. de Nevers's epistle to the little Le Clerc of the academy ; it is accompanied by one of your letters ; they always give us great pleasure : the packet came very slowly, we know not why ; there is neither rhyme nor reason in the conduct of the post. We think the epistle of M. de Nevers very pretty, and very entertaining ; in short, all his productions have so peculiar and so excellent a character, that after them we can relish no others. The two last verses of the song he made for you, charmed my daughter, as a Cartesian ; speaking of the fine wines of Italy, he says :—

Sur la membrane de leur sens
Font des sillons charmans.[2]

In short, it all deserves praise ; for instance, can anything be more humorous in his epistle than the smallest human string wound up to the highest pitch ; and the other extreme of a hundred crotchets rolling in bass to the very depth of the abyss ! This picture is complete ; and the opera of which he speaks is deservedly ridiculed ; but we cannot comprehend why he has given his son's name to this epistle : *cui bono* ? And where is the wit of it ? For the style resembles his own, as much as one drop of water resembles another ; it would be impossible to be deceived, and the subject can give offence to none : if you do not explain this to us, we shall be ill.

[1] Alexander VIII had been dead for two months and a few days. Before he died he distributed among his nephews all the money he possessed ; which made Pasquin say that it would have been better for the church to have been his niece than his daughter.

[2] They make charming furrows upon the membrane of the senses.

But let us talk of your grief at having loſt this delightful family,[1] which has so well celebrated your merit in verse and prose while you at the same time were so much alive to the charms of its society. It is easy to conceive the painfulness of this separation ; M. de Chaulnes will not suffer us to believe that he shares it with you : an Ambassador muſt be occupied only with the business of the King his maſter, who on his side has taken Mons, with a hundred thousand men, in a manner truly heroic, going everywhere, visiting every place, and indeed exposing himself too much. The policy of the Prince of Orange, who was taking his measures very quietly with the confederate Princes for the beginning of May, has found itself a little disconcerted by this promptitude : he threatens to come to the assiſtance of this great place ; a prisoner told this to the King, who replied coolly, " We came here to wait for him." I defy your imagination to frame a more perfect and more precise answer. I therefore suppose, my dear cousin, that by sending you the news of this other conqueſt,[2] in four days your Rome will not be sorry to live paternally with her elder son. God knows whether our Ambassador will ably support *the identity of the greateſt king in the world*, as M. de Nevers said.

Let us return to our own country. Our little Marquis de Grignan went to the siege of Nice like an adventurer, *vago di fama* (eager for fame). M. de Catinet gave him the command of the cavalry for several days, that he might not be a volunteer ; this did not prevent him from going everywhere, from exposing

[1] M. and Madame de Nevers.

[2] The town of Mons surrendered to the King on the 10th of April, the day on which this letter is dated, after a siege of eighteen days. To Boileau is attributed the following impromptu, addressed to a lady who required him to write some verses upon the occasion :—

Mons étoit, disoit-on, pucelle
Qu'un roi gardoit avec grand soin ;
Louis-le-Grand en eut besoin,
Mons se rendit : vous auriez fait comme elle.

Mons was a virgin, it is said,
Kept by a King with greateſt care ;
Louis the Great wish'd for the maid,
Mons yielded : so would you, my fair.

himself to the fire, which was at first very brisk, or from bearing fascines, for this is the fashion : but what sort of fascines, my dear cousin ? All from orange-trees, laurels, and pomegranates ! They feared nothing but too great a profusion of perfumes. Never was there so beautiful or so delightful a country seen ; you can conceive what it must be, from your knowledge of Italy. This is the country M. de Savoie has taken pleasure in losing and destroying : can we call this good policy ? We expect the little Colonel (the Marquis de Grignan), who is preparing to set out for Piedmont ; for this expedition to Nice is only *throwing the bait in expectation of the game ;* he will not be here when you pass ; but do you know who will find you here ? My son, who is coming to spend the summer with us, and to meet his Governor, by following the footsteps of his mother.

By the by, speaking of mother and son, do you know, my dear cousin, that I have been for these ten days or more in a sorrow of heart from which you alone have had the power of relieving me, while I have been employed in writing to you. This has been occasioned by the illness of the Dowager Madame de Lavardin, my most intimate and oldest friend : this woman, of such excellent and sound understanding ; this illustrious widow, who gathered us all under her wing ; this person of such exalted merit, has fallen suddenly into a sort of apoplexy ; she is drowsy, paralytic, and feverish : when she is roused she talks rationally, but she soon relapses ; in short, my child, my friendship could not sustain a greater loss ; I should feel it keenly. The Duchess de Chaulnes writes to me respecting her, and is very much grieved at her illness ; Madame de la Fayette still more so : indeed, her merit is so well known that every one is interested as in a public loss ; judge, then, what her friends must feel. I am informed that M. de Lavardin is very much affected ; I hope it is true ; it is an honour to him to grieve for a mother to whom he is in a manner indebted for whatever he is. Adieu, my dear cousin ; my heart is full, I can write no more : if I had begun with this melancholy subject I should not have had the courage to chat with you as I have done.

I shall say no more respecting the Temple, I have given my opinion of it already ; but I shall never like or approve it. Not so with regard to you ; for I love you, and shall love and approve you always.

[*Postcript by Madame de Grignan omitted*]

LETTER *CXCVI

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Chaulnes

Grignan, May 15, 1691.

Good heavens, my dear Governor, what a personage you are ! It will be impossible now to live with you ; your steps are so grand that we shall be thrown into the greatest embarrassments. What trouble did you not give the other day to the poor Spanish Ambassador ! Do you think it can be a very pleasant thing to put back for the whole length of a street ? And what a bustle have you not created with the Emperor's Ambassador, on the franchises ! The poor *sbirro* who is so severely lashed, is an excellent proof of it ; in short, you are become so punctilious that all Europe will think twice before it will know how to comport itself with your Excellency. If you bring this humour to us we shall no longer recognize you.—Let us now talk of the greatest affair at Court. Your imagination leads straight to new enterprises ; you suppose that the King, not content with Mons and Nice, wished to besiege Namur also : not at all ; there is a circumstance which has given his Majesty more pain and has cost him more time than his late conquests ; this the total defeat of the top-knots : no more head-dresses aspiring to the clouds, no more helmets, no more points, no more burgonets, no more jardinières ; the Princesses have appeared with heads reduced at least full three-quarters in height. They make use of their own hair, as they did ten years ago. I can give you no idea of the noise and confusion this change has

occasioned at Versailles. Every one reasoned profoundly upon this business, and it was a business that engrossed the attention of every one. We have been assured that M. de Langlée has written a treatise upon this change to send into the country; as soon as we receive it, sir, we will not fail to send it you; and, in the meantime, I very humbly kiss the hands of your Excellency.

You will have the goodness to excuse it, if what I here add is not written in so firm a hand as the above; my letter was sealed, and I open it to say that we have just left the table, where we have drunk your health in the most excellent and most refreshing white wine that was ever tasted, with three Bretons of your acquaintance, Messieurs du Cambout, de Trévigni, and du Guesclin; Madame de Grignan began, the rest followed. Brittany has done its duty: "To the health of the Ambassador; to the health of the Duchess de Chaulnes, agreed; to our dear Governor, agreed; to our Governor's lady: sir, I pass the toast to you, madam, I receive it." In short, so much has been done that we have even given the toast to M. de Coulanges; it is for him to answer.

LETTER *CXCVII

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges

Grignan, July 26, 1691.

I am so astonished at the news of the sudden death of M. de Louvois,[1] that I know not how or where to begin the subject

[1] The death of Louvois, as it is well known, has been the object of many discussions. It has been said that he was poisoned. Saint Simon affirms it; and his account charges the King with this crime. Voltaire says with reason that this is repugnant to every idea that has been formed of the character of Louis XIV. Of those who felt like him, some said that it was a revenge of the Duke de Savoy's; others that Louvois poisoned himself. The last opinion deserves to be inquired into. It is agreed on all sides that he was on the eve of disgrace, that he expected harsh treatment, that he spoke of death as preferable to this fall, and that he was a violent

to you. This great Minister then, this man of consequence, who held so exalted a situation, whose *le moi* (I), as M. Nicole says, was so extensive ; who was the centre of so many things, is dead ; how many affairs, designs, projects, secrets, interests to unravel, wars begun, intrigues, and noble moves at chess, had he not to make and to conduct ! " O, God, grant me a little time ; I want to give check to the Duke of Savoy, checkmate to the Prince of Orange." No, no, not a moment, a single moment. Can we reason upon this strange event ? Indeed we cannot ; it is in our closet we must reflect upon it. This is the second Minister [1] you have seen expire since you have been at Rome : nothing is more different than the manner of their death ; but nothing more similar than their fortune, and the hundred thousand chains which attached them both to the world.

With regard to the great objects which ought to lead you to God, you say you find your religious sentiments shaken by what is passing at Rome and in the conclave. My poor cousin, you are deceived ; I have heard that a man of very excellent understanding drew a quite contrary inference from what he saw in this great city ; he concluded that the Christian religion must necessarily be all holy and all miraculous, to subsist thus of itself in the midst of so many disorders and so much profanation. Do then as he did, draw the same inferences, and believe that this very city was formerly washed with the blood

and passionate man, whom no scruple restrained. Under all these circumstances there is nothing very improbable in his suicide. But it appears that this fact was never cleared up ; and it is an inconvenience to which we are easily resigned. It is certain, however, that the King made no concealment that the event of his death happened very opportunely to draw him out of difficulties ; it is also certain that the death of this man, who had done so much harm, was a great loss. The epitaph of Louvois, which appeared at that time, gave a good idea of the public opinion respecting him :—

Ici gît, sous qui tout plioit,
Et qui de tout avoit connoissance parfaite :
Louvois que personne n'aimoit,
Et que tout le monde regrette.

Here lies one to whom all yielded,
And who knew of all the bent ;
Louvois, who sense with power wielded,
Whom no one loved, and all lament.

[1] M. de Seignelai.

of an infinite number of martyrs ; that in the first centuries all the intrigues of the conclave ended in choosing from among the priests him who appeared to have the greatest zeal and strength to endure martyrdom ; that there were thirty-seven Popes who suffered, one after the other, and that the certainty of their fate had no influence over them to make them fly from, or refuse, a situation to which death was attached, and a death of the most horrible nature. You have only to read this history to be convinced that a religion, subsisting by a continual miracle, both in its establishment and its duration, cannot be an invention of men. Men do not think thus : read St. Augustine in his *Vérité de la Religion* (*Truth of Religion*) ; read Abbadie,[1] very different indeed from that great saint, but not unworthy of being compared with him when he speaks of the Christian religion : ask the Abbé de Polignac what he thinks of this book. Collect all these ideas, and do not judge so hastily ; believe that whatever intrigues may take place in the conclave, it is the Holy Ghost that always makes the Pope. God works all, he is the sovereign of all, and this is what we ought to think : I have read this sentiment in a good book : " What evil can happen to a man who knows that God does all things, and who loves whatever God does ? " And with this my dear cousin, I take my leave.

LETTER *CXCVIII

From Madame de Sévigné to the Count de Bussy

Paris, January 27, 1692.

We arrived here, my dear cousin, at the end of the year, soon enough for M. de Grignan to be received into the order of knighthood, but not sufficiently soon to have the honour and the pleasure of seeing and embracing you. I thought of the words of the opera :—

J'aurai beau me presser, j'arriverai trop tard.[2]

[1] Author of a book on the truth of the Christian religion. He was a Protestant.
[2] It will be in vain for me to press forward, I shall arrive too late.

You did indeed set out at the time you mentioned, and I know by my niece de Montataire that you are either at your country house or at Autun, quietly enjoying the favour the King has granted you. You required this indulgence ; and though I have expressed myself very unseasonably, and very uselessly, by making comparisons between what might be, and what was, I have very much felt this last disposition of Providence, whose every arrangement I ought to adore, professing, as I do, to be entirely devoted to His will. It is indeed a folly to look back upon the past. I ask pardon of God, and of you also.

Let me hear from you ; tell me what sort of life you lead ; whether my niece D'Alets, and Madame de Toulongeon, do not contribute to render it happy ; whether your mind does not contract, as M. Nicole expresses it, by the distance of the objects that set it in motion ? My daughter and I found that we were a little injured ; but we begin to recover, and our friends are once more willing to own us. I can answer for you, my dear cousin, and I have heard you were very well at Fontainebleau ; and when you are not at Court I rely on my niece D'Alets to call forth your vivacity by the exercise of her own. I have too often recommended you to each other to fear for either of you the accidents which happen to others. The whole Court is full of joy and rejoicings at the marriage of M. de Chartres and Mademoiselle de Blois. There will be a grand ball, for which all those who say they have not a farthing in the world are making preparations that will cost them from two to three thousand pistoles. This makes us doubt their poverty, which, however, is real. But the French have resources in their wish to please the King, which would be incredible, whatever we were told, if we did not witness them with our own eyes. We shall see therefore all the courtiers, old and young, dressed according to their age, and every one most splendidly.

M. de Grignan and my daughter assure you of their best services. They have a little girl here, who, without possessing her mother's beauty, has so well tempered and softened the air of the Grignans that she is really very handsome. You will some day perhaps judge for yourself. I sincerely hope so, and that you will continue to love me as much as I love you. I embrace my dear niece D'Alets.



CHATEAU DE GRIGNAN

LETTER *CXCIX

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges, who was at that time at Anci-le-Franc, at the house of Madame de Louvois

Grignan, September 9, 1694.

I have received several of your letters, my dear cousin ; there are none lost, and it would be a pity, for they have all their particular merit, and are the delight of our society. Your superscription, on the last, in which you bade adieu to all by name, has given offence to no one : *Au Chateau Royal de Grignan.* This striking address gives us at least the pleasure of believing that in the number of beauties with which your imagination is crowded, that of this chateau, which is by no means common, still holds its place, and it is one of its noblest titles ; I must talk to you a little respecting it, since you are its admirer. The vile staircase by which, to the disgrace of the Adhémars, you ascended into the second court, is quite thrown down, and is superseded by one of the most agreeable kind imaginable ; I do not say large, or magnificent, because my daughter having been unwilling to remove all the lower apartments, the space was necessarily confined, and there a masterpiece has been effected. The vestibule is handsome, and makes a very comfortable eating room : you ascend to it by a large flight of steps. The arms of Grignan are over the door ; you like them, and it is for that reason I mention it. The apartments of the Prelates, of which you only know the saloon, are furnished very genteelly, and the use to which we appropriate them is delightful. But since we are here, let us talk a little of the cruel and continual entertainment that is given, particularly in times like these ; only the same things, however, are eaten here, that are eaten everywhere else ; partridges, which are common enough ; but it is not common that they should be all like those you meet with at Paris, when every one puts his nose close and with a face of praise exclaims : " What a flavour ! Only smell ! " We

suppress all these astonishments ; the partridges are all fed with thyme, marjoram, and every ingredient that enters into the composition of our perfume bags ; there is no choice. I may say the same of our fat quails, of which the thigh must separate from the body at the least warming, which it never fails to do ; and of the turtle-doves, which are also super-excellent. As for the melons, figs, and muscadine grapes, it is really wonderful : if from any strange whim we should wish to find a bad melon we should be obliged to send for it to Paris ; no such can be found here : sweet white figs, muscadine grapes, like grains of amber which you may devour till they almost intoxicate you if you eat too many of them, because it is like sipping the most exquisite wine of St. Laurent. What a life, my dear cousin ! You lead such another under the less burning rays of the sun ; it does not at all remind you of La Trappe. See what a detail I have fallen into, it is chance which directs our pens ; I return you all you send to me, and which I so much admire ; this freedom is convenient ; we do not go far for the subject of our letters.

I highly applaud the courage of Madame de Louvois in having quitted Paris, contrary to the advice of all those who wished to alarm her respecting the badness of the air ; pray where is this bad air to be met with ? Who told them that it was not at Paris ? We find it when it pleases God, and not before. Tell me a great deal of your grandeurs at Tonnerre and Anci-le-Franc. I have seen this noble chateau, and a Queen of Sicily on a gate, from whom M. de Noyon proceeds in a straight line. You are fortunate indeed : on leaving the dignities of the Duke de Chaulnes you are introduced into the abundance and riches of Madame de Louvois ; follow this beneficent star so long as it will conduct you. I advised this the other day in a letter to Madame de Coulanges. She has told me of Carette ; Oh, what a fool !

How can we pass from all this, my dear cousin, to Marshal d'Humières, the most amiable, the most beloved, of all the courtiers ? He said to the Curate of Versailles : "Sir, you see a man who has only four hours to live, and who has never thought either of his spiritual or temporal affairs" ; he

said truly, and it is a truth worthy of reflection. But I quit this serious subject to ask you in a different tone of seriousness if I may not assure Madame de Louvois of my most humble respects; she is so good, that she always gives us a desire to exercise this feeling towards her. Tell me who is of your party, and pay me with the money you have now in use. I am glad you are nearer to us, though it gives no greater hope; but still it is something. M. de Grignan is returned to Marseilles; it is the signal that we shall soon have him here. The fleet, which is near Barcelona, looks as if it would soon take the course which the season advises. All here love and embrace you, each according to his *pro rata*, and I in a greater degree than all. M. de Carcassonne is delighted with your letters.

LETTER CC

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges

Grignan, October 4, 1694.

Your letter, my dear cousin, could not be too long expected; it has delighted us all; we have read it over and over again; we have sung your songs over and over again; and when M. de Grignan arrived yesterday from Versailles, where he had been on business, the first thing we did was to read the letter and the songs once more. They found their place, after the first surprise he gave us was at end; for he had fallen on a step at Sorgues, and had bruised his nose so much and his head also slightly and was covered with such immense plasters, that neither *La Rapinière* nor *Le Destin* [1] ever wore more remarkable ones; but, convinced that it would have no ill consequence, we resumed our mirth at your expense, and never did the beginning of a discourse captivate the auditors more agreeably. The chateau of *Anci-le-Franc, that of Grignan, Tonnerre, Grignan, Grignan and Tonnerre*; this equality, this balance, must equally please

[1] Characters in Scarron's comic romance.

the living and the dead. After that you represent to us, as in a mirror, the beauty, grandeur, magnificence, extent of all these possessions, and then you exclaim : " How is it possible that the Lords of such royalties could determine to part with them ? " Alas ! you give the reason yourself in one of your songs ; it is because the hospital has long been attached to the noble house of Tonnerre ; this is the true and only reason ; a reason which is incontrovertible ; a reason which closes the lips ; a reason, in short, which breaks through stone walls, which causes everything to be Madame de Louvois's and makes it a fortunate circumstance to have found a Minister rich enough to purchase such sovereignties which you place with justice far above those of Parma and Modena. For myself, I can very easily comprehend the happiness of these people, weighed down with their own poverty and that of their masters, at finding themselves under the dominion of a woman of high rank, the granddaughter of Gilles,[1] and of the Mandelots, replete with merit, virtue, and wealth, to dispense on all occasions according to their different wants. What an advantage ! What a protection ! And how must it dispose them to cry *Vive Madame* with their whole hearts ! It is quite the country for making presents, and these presents will be returned to the givers with interest. Nothing can be prettier than all your conceits ; the apparitions, the masks,[2] and the hero confined and preserved in an armoury with his descendants ! My dear cousin, you have surpassed yourself, which is saying a great deal ; but that little chapel of ease, at your bedside, which, no doubt, you have had measured, and which is sixty-three fathoms in length, makes us think of our chapter (de Grignan), which was supposed to be one of the finest in France. Do you know, that this chapel is like the church of Notre Dame at Paris. My daughter desires me to give you a thousand remembrances, and to assure you that she is delighted to find you again in good humour, and in the full enjoyment of your poetical vein. She entreats you, like me, to thank Madame de Louvois for the honour of her remembrance. Paulina has assisted me in composing a tune for your delightful

[1] Gilles Souvré, Marshal of France.
[2] The volumes of *Amadis*.

verses : she loves you with all her heart ; and how is it possible, my amiable friend, not to love you ? If you were so just as to love those who love you, I should fare well. All our troop return your remembrances double-fold ; your name and your praises resound throughout this chateau ; and why should you not return, so long as there are Popes to make, and Cardinals who will love you ?

LETTER *CCI

From Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Coulanges

Grignan, November 16, 1694.

I know not, Madam, where the letter, which I address to you, will find my cousin ; it is full of trifles unworthy the accounts he gives us daily of his travels. I know not whether you remember your last letter, and with what grace and politeness you excuse yourself for having showed one of mine ; and how you assure me that since the world has seen none of them it is a sign that I can have written none. I wish, my friend, I deserved all your encomiums on this subject, and I pity you for not receiving your own letters : this is all I can say. I believe nothing can now prevent us from concluding our marriage ; in short, everything is settled, and it appears to me that all the actors necessary to this ceremony will be assembled from every quarter in a fortnight. M. de Grignan has had attacks of giddiness which have alarmed us on account of his frightful fall : it was a miracle that his head was not dashed in pieces ; it was three weeks after the accident that this giddiness showed itself ; but we are assured that it is of no consequence. He sends you a thousand compliments, and a thousand after those : he said the other day that he would write to you, and I promised to inform you of it. Adieu, my dearest friend ; when I do not name Paulina, it is not her fault, for she is always alive to you, and enjoys your wit and your letters in a degree which is meritorious to herself ; she entreats you not to forget her.

LETTER *CCII

To the Same

Grignan, February 3, 1695.

Ah ! talk to me not of Madame de Meckelbourg [1] ; I renounce her ; how, in the name of God, and even of humanity, could she keep so much gold, so much silver, so much furniture, so many jewels, in the midst of the extreme distresses of the poor, which, of late, have been overwhelming ? But how must she appear in the eyes of the world—the world, whose esteem and approbation we wish to preserve beyond the tomb ? How could she bear to be thought the most avaricious of beings ? Avaricious to the poor ; avaricious to her servants, to whom she has left nothing ; avaricious to herself, since she almost starved herself to death ; and in dying, when she could no longer conceal this horrible passion, to appear in the eyes of the public, avarice itself ? My dear Madam, I could discourse for a year upon this subject ; I abhor this frenzy of the human mind, and it is a personal insult to me to abuse it as Madame de Meckelbourg did : we loved one another very much formerly, we called each other sisters. I renounce her ; let her name be mentioned to me no more.

Let us talk of our Hôtel de Chaulnes, which is precisely the contrary : these are adorable people, and make a worthy use of their wealth ; what they receive with one hand they dispense with the other ; and if they had no ingots of gold at St. Malo's they would abridge themselves to support the high station in which God has placed them. The poor feel their liberality ; in short, they are people who cannot be too much loved, and honoured, and admired. I am so fascinated with them that I even give the credit to M. de Chaulnes of having taught friendship to Monsieur ; it is a science which persons of his rank have

[1] The beautiful Duchess de Châtillon, sister of Marshal de Luxembourg.

not often the happiness of knowing. I am glad not to be forgotten in this hotel ; I entreat you my amiable friend, not to forget me yourself. Paulina embraces you, and can no longer dispense with your kindness. We are still engaged in wedding-visits ; the ice gave way with Madame de Brancas and Madame de Buous, ladies of consequence, whom we had desired not to come : they were on the point of falling through it, and were in danger of their lives, in coming to congratulate us ; this is the way in which people love in this country ; is it the same at Paris ? I, however, am satisfied, at least ; and I swear to you that I shall have real joy in receiving you.

LETTER *CCIII

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges

Grignan, April 26, 1695.

When you write to me, my good cousin, I am delighted ; your letters are as agreeable as yourself ; they are read with a feeling of pleasure that diffuses itself over everything ; we love to hear you, we approve, we admire you, every one according to the degree of love he bears you. When you do not write to me, I neither scold nor pout : " My cousin," I say, " is in some enchanted palace ; my cousin is not at home ; my poor cousin is no doubt run away with " ; and I wait with patience the return of your remembrance, without ever doubting your friendship ; for how is it possible not to love you ? It was the first thing you effected when you began to open your eyes ; and it was I who set the fashion of loving you, and thinking you worthy of being loved ; so well-conditioned a friendship has nothing to fear from the injustice of time. It appears to us as if time, who does so much harm in passing over the heads of others, had done no injury to you ; you know nothing of your register ; you are convinced there is a great error in the date of the year ; the Chevalier de Grignan says that what has been taken from

yours has been added to his, and he is right ; it is thus his age must be calculated. For myself, who have yet no warning of the number of my years, I am sometimes surprised at my health ; I am cured of a thousand little indispositions I formerly laboured under ; not only do I advance slowly, like a tortoise, but I am almost tempted to believe that I move like a crab. I endeavour, however, not to be the dupe of these deceitful appearances, and in a few years I shall advise you to do the same.[1]

You are at Chaulnes, my dear cousin. It is an enchanted spot, of which M. and Madame de Chaulnes are going to take possession ; you will there find the children of the little nightingales whom you have so prettily celebrated in your songs ; they ought to redouble theirs, when they learn from you the happiness they will have in seeing the owners of this beautiful place more frequently. I have followed every sentiment of these good governors, and I have not found one which has not been in its place, and which has not taken its rise in good sense and the most perfect generosity. They have felt the lively grief of a whole province, which they have governed and loaded with blessings for twenty-six years : they have obeyed, however, most nobly ; they had need of their courage to subdue the force of habit, which had, as it were, united them to Brittany ; now they have other thoughts ; they enter into the taste of quietly enjoying their greatness ; I find nothing that is not praiseworthy in the whole of this conduct ; I have traced it, and felt it with the interest and attention of a person who loves and honours them from the bottom of her heart. I have informed our Duchess how M. de Grignan stands at Marseilles, and in this province, without any sort of dissatisfaction ; on the contrary, it appears by the orders of Marshal de Tourville, that he has been considered in everything ; the Marshal is to ask him for troops when he wants them ; and M. de Grignan, as Lieutenant of the army, will command the marine forces under the Marshal. This is the principal concern in this world : we wish to act, cost what it will. I pity my son for having lost the pleasure of paying his respects to our ancient governors ; he feels this loss as he ought to feel it. I am uneasy respecting

[1] Within a year she was no more !

Madame de Coulanges, and am going to write to her. Receive the friendship of all who are here ; and come, that I may kiss both your cheeks.

LETTER *CCIV

To the Same

Grignan, May 28, 1695.

I have received your two letters from Chaulnes, my dear cousin ; we found some verses in them that delighted us ; we have sung them with extreme pleasure, and more than one person will tell you so, for you must not be ignorant of the good taste we preserve here for everything you do. With respect to the gaiety and charms of your mind, you certainly advance and go back with respect to your register : this is all that can be wished, and is what naturally lays the foundation of the desire every one has for your society. To whom are you not welcome ? With whom do you not accommodate yourself ? And then, which is best of all, your conduct in not obtruding yourself, and in allowing room to the wish of seeing you, gives the true relish to your vanity. The proverb must be forcible indeed, if it be true you are not a prophet in your own country. I often receive news from Madame de Coulanges : her correspondence is very entertaining, and her health ought no longer to create alarm, especially having the resource which we must have, that when she is tired of medicine, and undeceived with respect to it, the most salutary remedy will be to take no more.

But to return to Chaulnes. I know its beauty and can discern from hence how dull our good governor is there. It is in vain for you to give the best reasons in the world ; he will constantly answer, " I do not know " : and if you go on he will silence you by saying : " I shall die." This is what will happen, no doubt, till he has acquired a taste for repose and for the charms of a quiet life : habits are too strong, and the agitation attached to command and to a high station has made too deep an impression to be easily effaced. I wrote to this Duke upon the

desire of my son, and I jested with him, saying things I did not believe respecting his solitude at Chaulnes ; I treated him like a true hermit, holding conversations with the beautiful fountain called *the solitary*. I supposed his repasts suited to his situation, and that dates and wild fruits would compose all his banquets ; I pitied his house-steward, and in saying all these trifles I found that I stood in great need of you ; and that the braying [1] I know him to possess would make strange work with my poor letter. You came to my assistance as I supposed you would ; and you are now in another country, where you feel all the delight of paternal love ; what say you ? You could not have believed it to be so strong, if you had not experienced it : it would have been great pity if all the good instructions you have given to little children had not been followed by some child of your imagination. The little Count de Nicei is a masterpiece,[2] and the singularity of being invisible makes him superior to the rest. You make so good a use of this story that I scarcely dare recall you : you have immortalized it ; nothing can be prettier than these couplets, we sing them with pleasure. We have had a delightful introduction of spring ; but for two days past the rain, which we do not like here, has been as violent as in Brittany and Paris, so that we have been accused of having brought it into fashion ; it interrupts our walks, but it does not silence our nightingales ; in short my dear cousin, our days pass too quickly. We dispense with great bustle, and with the great world ; our society, however, would not displease you ; and if ever a puff of wind should blow you to this *royal* chateau—. But this is a chimera, we must hope to see you again elsewhere in a more natural and probable situation ; we have yet a summer before us for writing to each other.

The marriage of M. de Lauzun has surprised us [3] ; I should never have guessed it on the day I wrote to you respecting

[1] M. de Chaulnes read as ill as M. de Coulanges read well.

[2] The whole of this pleasantry is explained in some songs of M. de Coulanges to Madame de Louvois, and turns upon a story which had come to them from Provence.

[3] To Mademoiselle de Lorges. This marriage was an arrangement made by ambition. With a large fortune and high rank, Lauzun's mania was to become a favourite once more. He could not succeed.

another marriage,[1] when you were at Lyons: Madame de Coulanges remembers it still. Every one here loves you, and thanks you for your remembrance. I write to you imprudently, without considering that you are no longer at Chaulnes, and that in another country all this will be nothing. I must conclude with Paulina; she sings your praises in singing your songs; she still loves you, and desires you to give her acknowledgments to the Duchess de Villeroi; it is impossible to forget a pretty friend. Adieu, cousin, you know how much I am yours.

[*Postscript of Madame de Grignan omitted*]

LETTER *CCV

From Madame de Sévigné to the President de Moulceau

Grignan, June 29, 1695.

It is gaining your cause well, sir, to lose it as you do. In spite of the intention, which I see you have, to break off all intercourse with the world, I cannot help telling you that your style, which we have recognized as possessing its usual charms, has given us a degree of pleasure, which we have not experienced since your silence. My daughter and I have read your letter over many times: it is a delightful one; though you, perhaps, did not feel its value. How happy you are, sir, in preserving this alliance of wit with the seriousness and solidity of devotion! It enables you to make well-placed reflections on the two tropics which you have lately seen so near you; and I know not how our friend Corbinelli has been able to withstand your letters. It is pity that a moral intercourse, like that which was established between you, should have been lost: the loss would not have happened with us; and as the appetite increases with eating, we have so great a desire to have once more the honour and pleasure of seeing you here, that my daughter cannot understand why, having health, the thought has not occurred to you

[1] That is, when the marriage of M. de Lauzun to Mademoiselle was spoken of.

to come and see us, and why you may not even come this autumn. In vain I represent to her that we shall not be there, and that without me you would fall again into your lethargy ; it matters not, she insists on my hazarding the proposal. Indeed, if you could judge of the pleasure we should derive from a visit by the pleasure your letter has given us, I in conscience believe you would not be able to resist us. I am going to speak of you, sir, to our *friend.* He will reply to me ; I shall be obliged to acquaint you with his answer ; perhaps he will still find some other opportunity to say a word to you : in short, I will forget no reason nor pretext to make you say a few words more ; and to tell you, sir, that your understanding and your wit have made in no brains such deep impressions as they have done in those of your humble servants.

LETTER *CCVI

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges

Grignan, August 6, 1695.

I shall write you only a very short and poor letter, my dear friend, to thank you for yours, which has given us great pleasure. I shall never change my opinion with respect to long and circumstantial details, while I read yours. We are charmed with Navarre [1] ; the situation, the building, like that of Marly, which I have never seen, the excellent society—all this convinces me that the house ought to rank with yours : as for Choisy, it is made on purpose for you. Your couplets inform all who pass of the nobility of its origin and its fate ; but you deserve to be exalted to the skies by the couplet in which you humble yourself to the foot of the mount *with the coachman of Verthamont* [2] ; any man who will place himself up to the ears in this mud, and will croak such pretty couplets, deserves the situation M. Tambonneau gives him. The couplet ranks with the best

[1] A chateau near Evreux, which belonged to the Duke de Bouillon.
[2] A famous coachman, who made all the songs of the Pont-Neuf.

you have ever made ; the Countess, whose approbation you always ask, entreats you to believe it ; it is charming, it surprises : in short, croak on, and communicate your croakings to us.

But, good God, what an effusion of blood at Namur ! How many tears ! How many widows ! And how many afflicted mothers ! And they are cruel enough to think this is not sufficient, and they wish that Marshal de Villeroi had also beaten, killed, and massacred poor M. de Vaudemont ![1] What madness ! I am uneasy respecting your nephew de Sanzei ; I pity his mother ; it is said that she is coming nearer to wait the event of the siege, which appears to us to be worthy of the fury of the Marshal (de Boufflers) who defends it ; no opportunity of fighting is loft. Our Germany is very quiet ; our principal anxiety is for her.[2] Adieu, my dear cousin ; did I not promise you that my letter would be dull ? We have sometimes sorrows, and we know why ; I speak of them to Madame de Coulanges. My daughter sends you her remembrances ; you have highly amused her by your songs and your chat, for your letter is a true conversation. I have scattered your remembrances in every apartment ; they have been received, and are returned with zeal. I embrace you, my amiable cousin, and exhort you ftill to spend your time delightfully in honour of polygamy,[3] which, inftead of being a hanging-case to you, conftitutes all the pleasure and happiness of your life.

LETTER *CCVII

To the Same

Grignan, October 15, 1695.

I have juft been writing to our Duke and Duchess de Chaulnes ; but I excuse you from reading my letters ; they are not worth reading. I defy all your emphasis, all your points

[1] M. de Vaudemont made a noble retreat before Marshal de Villeroi, who had loft time.

[2] On account of the Marquis de Grignan, who was in the army of Germany.

[3] A jeft on the subject of M. de Coulanges's *second wife*, Madame de Louvois.

and commas, to produce any good effect, therefore leave them as they are ; besides, I have spoken of several little things to our Duchess, which are not very entertaining. The best thing you could do for me, my good cousin, would be to send us, by some subtle magic, all the blood, all the vigour, all the health, and all the mirth, which you have to spare, to transfuse it into my child's frame. For these three months she has been afflicted with a species of disorder which is said to be not dangerous, and which I think the most distressing, and the most alarming of any. I own to you, my dear cousin, that it destroys me, and that I have not fortitude enough to endure all the bad nights she makes me pass ; in short, her last state has been so violent that it was necessary to have recourse to bleeding in the arm : strange remedy, which makes blood to be shed when too much has been shed already ; it is burning the taper at both ends ; she has told us so, for, in the midst of her weakness and change, nothing can exceed her courage and patience. If we could regain strength we should soon take the road to Paris ; it is what we wish, and then we would present the Marchioness of Grignan to you, with whom you must already begin to be acquainted on the word of the Duke de Chaulnes, who has very gallantly forced open her door, and has drawn a very pleasing likeness of her. Preserve your friendship for us, my dear cousin, however unworthy of it our sorrow may make us ; we must love our friends with all their faults ; it is a great one to be ill : God grant, my dear friend, that you may escape it. I write to Madame de Coulanges in the same plaintive tone, which will not quit me ; for how is it possible not to be as ill in mind as this Countess, whom I see daily before my eyes, is in body ? Madame de Coulanges is very fortunate in being out of the scrape ; it seems to me as if mothers ought not to live long enough to see their daughters in such situations : I respectfully complain of it to Providence.

We have just been reading a discourse that has charmed us all, and even the Archbishop of Arles, who is one of the trade ; it is the funeral oration of M. de Fieubet by the Abbé Anselme ; it is the most correct, the wisest, the most suitable, and the most Christian performance that it was possible to make on such

a subject: it is full of quotations from the Holy Scriptures, of excellent applications, of devotion, of piety, of dignity, and of a noble flowing style. Read it: if you are of our opinion, so much the better for you; and if you are not, so much the better for you still, in one sense, as it is a sign that your happiness, your health, and your vivacity render you deaf to this language. But be this as it may, such is the advice I give you; for it is certain that we cannot laugh always; a song tells us this truth.

LETTER *CCVIII

From Madame de Sévigné to the President de Moulceau

Grignan, Saturday, February 4, 1696.

I was right, sir, when I supposed you would be concerned at my anxiety, and would use all the diligence in your power to relieve it. M. Barbeirac's prescription and your letter had wings, as you wished; and it seems that this little fever which appeared so low, had wings too, for it vanished at the bare mention of M. Barbeirac's name. Seriously, sir, there is something miraculous in this sudden change; and I cannot doubt that your wishes and your prayers contributed to produce it. Judge of my gratitude by their effect. My daughter goes halves with me in all I say here: she returns you a thousand thanks, and entreats you to give a great many to M. Barbeirac. We are happy in having no longer anything to do but to take patience and rhubarb, which she finds agree well with her. We doubt not that in this quiet state, rhubarb is a medicine which M. Barbeirac must approve, with a regimen, which is sometimes better than all. Thank God, sir, both for yourself and for us; for we are certain that you are interested in this acknowledgment; and then, sir, cast your eyes upon all the inhabitants of this chateau, and judge of their sentiments for you.

LETTER *CCIX

To the Same

Grignan, February 29, 1696.

You are not yet quit of us, sir. It is easier to have no correspondence with us than to put a stop to that I have established, slight as it may be. I feel as if civility obliged me to tell you that we are very sorry that at the time we were so ill (for I always speak in the plural) you took the liberty to be ill also. We feel, too, that we owe to rhubarb, to which we consider ourselves so much obliged, this justice, at least, of not suffering it to be condemned without being heard; this is what I have done in the note I send to M. Barbeirac. I have not added your name, sir, from modesty; but from the friendship I entertain for you, and that which I flatter myself you entertain for us, I do not seal the note, and I entreat you to have the goodness to read it, and to make M. Barbeirac understand it; for I do not write methodically, and you alone can explain it. Have, therefore, this charity, sir; you will not seek far to find in your own heart all the goodness which is necessary to make you excuse such liberties. I have a third reason for writing to you. I must send you a letter which I have cheated our dear Corbinelli's philosophy out of: he has given me the name of *reprobate*, which I had forgotten, and which you so well deserved. Adieu, then, illustrious *reprobate*; never was such a character so perfectly esteemed by mother and daughter, as it is in you. It is a taste which you will renew, as soon as we see one of your letters, however short; and the least sentence of which will present to us again a style that has so peculiarly found the secret of pleasing us.

LETTER *CCX

From Madame de Sévigné to M. de Coulanges [1]

Grignan, March 29, 1696.

When I have no other employment I weep and bewail aloud the death of Blanchefort, that amiable, that excellent youth, who was held up to all our young people as a model for imitation. A reputation completely established, valour acknowledged and worthy of his name, a disposition happy for himself (for a bad disposition is a torment to its possessor), for his friends and for his family ; alive to the affection of his mother and his grandmother, loving them, honouring them, appreciating their merit, taking pleasure in proving to them his gratitude, and thereby repaying them for their extreme affection ; uniting good sense with a fine person ; not vain of his youth, as most young people are who seem to think themselves paragons of perfection ; and this dear boy, with all his perfections, gone in a moment, like a blossom borne away by the wind, without being in battle, without having an opportunity to fight, and without breathing even an unhealthy air ! Where, my dear cousin, can we find words to express our ideas of the grief of these two mothers, and to convey to them an adequate sense of what we feel here ? We do not think of writing to them ; but if at any time you should have an opportunity of mentioning my daughter and me, and the Grignans, make known our regret at this irreparable misfortune. Madame de Vins has lost everything, I own [2] ; for when the heart has chosen between two sons, one only is seen. I can talk of nothing else. I bow in reverence to the holy and modest tomb of Madame de Guise, whose renunciation of that of the kings her ancestors, merits an eternal crown.

[1] As the death of Madame de Sévigné happened in the beginning of April, it is probable that this letter is the last she wrote. We consider its recovery as a fortunate circumstance.

[2] Madame de Vins had lost an only son.

I think M. de Saint Géran happy indeed ; and so I think you, for having to comfort his wife. Say to her for us everything you think proper. And as for Madame de Miramion, that mother of the church, she will be a public loss. Adieu, my dear cousin, I cannot change my tone. You have finished your jubilee. The delightful trip to Saint Martin's has closely followed the sackcloth and ashes you mentioned to me. The happiness M. and Madame de Marsan are now enjoying well deserves that you should sometimes see them, and put them into your basket ; and I deserve a place in that in which you put those who love you ; but I fear that for them you have no basket.

LETTER *CCXI

From the Countess de Grignan to the President de Moulceau

Paris, April 18, 1696.

Your politeness, sir, need not lead you to fear the renewal of my grief,[1] in speaking to me of the afflicting loss I have sustained. This is an object which my mind bears constantly in view, and which is so deeply engraven in my heart that nothing has power to increase or diminish it. I am convinced, sir, that you could not have heard the dreadful misfortune which has happened to me, without shedding tears ; I can answer for your heart ; you lose a friend of incomparable merit and fidelity ; nothing is more worthy of your regret ; and what, sir, do not I lose ? what perfections were not united in her, to render her to me, by different characters, most dear and most precious ? A loss so complete and so irreparable, leads me to seek for consolation only in the bitterness of tears and groans. I have not strength to raise my eyes to the place whence comfort flows ; I can yet only cast them around me, I can no longer see the dear being who has loaded me with blessings, whose attention from day to day has been occupied

[1] Madame de Sévigné, as it appears, died early in April.

in adding fresh proofs of her love to the charms of her society. It is too true, sir, that it requires more than human fortitude to bear so cruel a disunion and so much privation. I was far from being prepared for it ; the perfect health I saw her enjoy, and a year's illness, which a hundred times endangered my own life, had taken from me the idea that the order of nature could be fulfilled by her dying first. I flattered myself that I should never have this great evil to endure : it is come upon me, and I feel it in all its severity. I deserve your pity, sir, and some share in the honour of your friendship, if sincere esteem and high veneration for your virtue can deserve it. My sentiments have been the same towards you since I had the pleasure of knowing you ; and I believe I have more than once told you that it is impossible for anyone to respect you more than I do.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

By A. L. HAYWARD

Volume I

LETTER I

Count de Bussy Rabutin (1618–93) was a cousin of Madame Sévigné, and her intimate friend from childhood. He served under Turenne in Flanders (1655), but his quarrelsome nature and a series of intrigues plunged him in disgrace, and he was banished to his estates in 1659. There he amused himself by writing the *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, relating the intrigues of many of the great Court ladies—a witty but malicious book, which brought him into yet further disgrace. It contained innuendoes amounting to a gross libel on Madame, and Louis XIV threw the author into the Bastille (1665), where he remained a year, only leaving there for banishment to the country for practically the remainder of his life. Friendly and kind to Bussy as Madame de Sévigné had ever been, a temporary monetary transaction so embittered him that he took the mean revenge of dragging her into his *Histoire* and venting his malice upon her good name. She was deeply offended, but with her sovereign good-nature, readily forgave him. Bussy's greatest claim to fame lies in his *Memoires* published after his death.

Madame de Sévigné's son, the Marquis de Sévigné, was born at The Rocks in the spring of 1648. The apparent discrepancy of dates arises from the use of the Old Style calendar, in which the year began on 25th March.

LETTER II

Madame de Montglas was the mistress of Bussy and, in a way, responsible for the trouble he got into over the *Histoire Amoureuse*. He showed her this scandalous record in manuscript, and, according

to his own story, she persuaded him to tear it up. This he did, but her husband coming in shortly afterwards, she told him what had happened; he picked up the fragments, pieced them together, and gave them back to Bussy. He later showed his MS. to his next mistress, Madame de la Baume, who copied it secretly, gave it to a few friends to read, and eventually sent a copy to Holland, where it was printed. Madame de Montglas broke with Bussy when he was disgraced.

LETTER IV

The Marquis de Pomponne was one of Madame de Sévigné's most intimate friends. In 1667 he was appointed ambassador to Stockholm, and four years later became minister of foreign affairs to Louis XIV. In 1679 he was disgraced through the machinations of Colbert and Louvois, but the King recognized his worth and ability by allowing him a handsome pension, as will appear in Letter CXXXVII *et seq.* He survived this eclipse, soon returned to Court, and in 1691 was reinstated in the cabinet.

Nicolas Fouquet (1615–80) was made superintendent of finance in 1653, and for some years carried out his duties with the utmost success. He possessed great personal wealth, and his post enabled him to increase his fortune enormously, for the money matters of the kingdom were in such confusion that an astute financier like Fouquet was easily able to turn them to his own benefit. His extravagance and ostentation aroused suspicions in the King's mind, and these were increased by the insinuations of Fouquet's enemy, Colbert. In August, 1661, Louis was entertained by Fouquet at his magnificent chateau at Vaux with a *fête* unrivalled at that time for splendour and luxury. Three weeks later Fouquet was placed under arrest, just as he was leaving the royal presence. His trial lasted for nearly three years, and its closing scenes are here described by Madame de Sévigné. Amongst his private effects was a box containing love-letters, and in this box were some notes from Madame de Sévigné. Attempts were made to drag her into the scandal, but Bussy Rabutin succeeded in

proving to the world that the notes were merely friendly, and in no sense love-letters.

The Chancellor who presided at Fouquet's trial was Pierre Seguier. *See* Notes to Letter LIV.

LETTER V

D'Artagnan was the famous musketeer, made familiar to the world by Alexandre Dumas. The original *Memoires de M. d'Artagnan* were founded on his own narrative of his exploits, much embroidered and added to by Courtils de Sandras and published at Cologne, 1701–2.

Port Royal was the famous Cistercian abbey near Marly, so closely associated with the Jansenist difficulties. Between 1664 and 1669, the Archbishop of Paris laid an interdict upon such of the nuns as refused to subscribe to his censure of Jansen.

LETTER VI

St. François de Sales (1567–1622) was bishop of Geneva from 1602 until his death. His beatification was decreed in 1626, and forty years later he was canonized.

LETTER VII

Madame de Scudéry (1607–1701) was the famous author of several interminably long novels which had a great vogue in her time. *Artamène, ou le grand Cyrus* appeared in ten volumes between 1648 and 1653; *Clélie* was as long, and *Almahide* ran into eight volumes. She established a *salon* under the name of *Société de Samedi*, and was generally known in literary and polite circles as "Sappho".

LETTER X

Bussy's letters to the King were to explain the presence and nature of the notes from Madame de Sévigné found among the private papers of Fouquet. *See* note to Letter IV.

The prettiest girl in France refers to Madame de Sévigné's daughter, Françoise-Marguerite, at that time 20 years of age. She was famous for her beauty—" Cette beauté brulera le monde ", said de Treville.

Candia was suffering a siege by the Turks, who occupied it in 1669. The French expedition was a failure, and its officers returned " dégoûtés de la manière dont leurs services étaient appréciés."

LETTER XI

Madame de Sévigné's daughter was married 29th January, 1669. De Grignan was at that time about forty ; he had been twice married, his second wife dying two years before his wedding with Mlle. de Sévigné.

LETTER XII

Madame de la Fayette, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne (1634–92) was one of Madame de Sévigné's dearest friends, and distantly connected with her by her mother's second marriage. Her husband deserted her about 1660, and some five years later she became enamoured of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, the liaison lasting until his death. She published several novels under the pseudonym of J. R. de Segrais, her *Princesse de Clèves* proving a masterpiece which may be said to have originated the modern novel. Her intimacy with Madame (Henrietta of England) enabled her to write *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre*, which did not appear until 1720.

The Abbé Coulanges appears constantly throughout these letters as " The Worthy ", " The Abbé ", and so forth. He was Madame de Sévigné's uncle, and at the age of 9, her parents and grandparents being dead, she became his ward, and resided at his abbacy at Livry. The Abbé carried out his trust well, looking after the girl and taking care of her fortune with exemplary fidelity. He lived to within ten years of her death, and during that long lifetime maintained the intimacy and love of those early days.

LETTER XIII

Corbinelli was an intimate friend of Bussy, and through him became acquainted with Madame de Sévigné. He was a man of great taste in art and literature, a devout follower of Descartes, and a dabbler in history. He helped Madame de Sévigné in her business affairs, and was a frequent visitor to Livry when she was staying there.

Madame, Henrietta Duchess of Orleans (1644–70), was something of a tragic figure. She was brought up in France and at one time was suggested as a bride for Louis XIV. Unhappily for her, however, she was married to his brother Philip, a nincompoop whose ideas were limited to his toilet and whose only passion was that of jealousy. Henrietta was a clever, handsome girl, and soon after her marriage she became friendly with the King, who relished her wit and liveliness. She inspired the Court with new life, got up splendid entertainments, helped Louis with his State affairs, and was in the height of her success when the insane jealousy of her husband reduced her to misery by taking her from Court. Thereafter her conduct was at least imprudent, and various stories were told about her. In 1670 Louis sent her to England to obtain the signature of Charles II to the Treaty of Dover, and was highly delighted at her success. This, however, only enraged her husband the more. She returned to a sort of disgrace at Court, and a few months later died, considerable suspicion attaching to her husband of having had her poisoned.

LETTER XVI

Forbin de Janson, Bishop of Marseilles, was a difficult opponent of the Count de Grignan in the parliament of Provence. De Grignan was governor, and the parliament raised objections against voting a tax for the King's benefit. In 1675 the Bishop was sent on a mission to Poland, and shortly after his return was translated to Beauvais. In 1690 he was made a cardinal.

LETTER XVII

Philippe-Emmanuel de Coulanges, the cousin of Madame de Sévigné, had been brought up with her. A gay, careless fellow, nicknamed "Le Chansonnier" from a taste for making *chansons*, which were then much in vogue, his good-humour and constant love of good-fellowship made him one of the most popular figures of his circle. He married a daughter of de Gué Bagnols, niece of Le Tellier, a witty, sarcastic woman, somewhat given to prudently concealed liaisons. She and Madame de Sévigné were close friends, and constant visitors at each other's houses.

The Duke de Lauzun (1632–1723) was a quaint little courtier, whose name was a bye-word for ugliness and whimsicality. One of his first mistresses was the daughter of the Duke de Grammont, afterwards Princess of Monaco, and it was to prevent an amour of hers with the King that he promoted the interests of Madame de Montespan. He quarrelled with Montespan, however, and as a consequence tasted a short spell of the Bastille. Then La Grande Mademoiselle, the Duchess de Montpensier, fell in love with him, and Lauzun saw the chance of his life. The wedding was actually fixed for the 20th December, 1670, but two days before it was to take place, Louis forbade the match. Lauzun was sent to the Bastille again, and from there to Pignerol. More than ten years elapsed before he was given his liberty, he then returned and married Mademoiselle, though rumour had it that they had been secretly married long before. He was then 50, and she was four years older. Despite this romance they were not happy, and the story goes that Lauzun once said, "Louise d'Orléans, tire-moi mes bottes!" They separated before long, and in 1685 Lauzun went to England and rose to a considerable position in the Court of James II. After the Revolution, he brought the Queen of England to France, devoted himself to her service, fought in Ireland, and remained a constant friend to the exiled family.

LETTER XX

Mellusina, Madame de Marans, a witty scandal-monger, had been gossiping and romancing about Madame de Grignan, and, as we see in this letter, was brought to book by Mesdames de Sévigné, de la Fayette, and M. de la Rochefoucauld.

Madame de la Troche was a bustling, cheery friend of Madame de Sévigné, "La bonne la Troche est toujours la bonté même, et allante, et venante," is said of her on one occasion. Her husband's post as *conseiller* of the Rennes parliament kept her constantly in the provinces, but she followed the Paris fashions with great ardour. In 1671 she wrote: "Imaginez-vous une tête partagée à la paysanne jusqu'à deux doigts du bourrelet; on coupe les cheveux de chaque côté, d'étage, en étage, dont on fait de grosses boucles rondes et négligées, qui ne viennent pas plus bas qu'un doigt au-dessous de l'oreille; cela fait quelque chose de fort jeune et fort joli, et comme deux gros bouquets de cheveux de chaque côté . . . On met les rubans comme à l'ordinaire, et une grosse boucle nouée entre le bourrelet et la coiffure; quelque fois on la laisse traîner jusque sur la gorge," etc. After her husband's death, in 1689, she settled at Paris, whence she wrote gossipy letters to Madame de Grignan.

Madame la Marquise de Lavardin was one of Madame de Sévigné's band of intimates. "Mesdames de La Fayette, de Lavardin et du Lude formant, avec Madame de Sévigné, le corps des veuves," writes Aubenas. She was playfully called "la gazette", from her love of retailing news.

Madame de Mazarin, the infamous Hortense Mancini, was then at the height of her intrigues.

Madame Scarron (Madame de Maintenon) was at this time a widow, and governess of Madame de Montespan's children by the King. *See* note to Letter XCVII.

LETTER XXII

Louise de la Vallière (1644–1710) was originally the companion of Madame (Henrietta of England) and was brought forward as a blind, to divert attention from Madame's friendship with the King. Louis and Louise fell passionately in love with one another, however, and during a chequered reign over his affections she bore him several children, of whom one, Mademoiselle de Blois made a good match. Louise was usurped by Madame de Montespan and, after many indignities, fled to a convent, as related in this letter. She was brought back again, but three years later she was allowed to take her final vows in the Carmelite convent in the Rue d'Enfer. Of all Louis's mistresses Madame de la Vallière was the only one to love him wholeheartedly and sincerely, with never a thought of his rank.

LETTER XXV

Louis Bourdaloüe (1632–1704) was a Jesuit preacher whose oratory made him one of the best known men of his time. His sermons at Versailles created something of an impression even amongst those accustomed to the periods of Corneille and Racine.

Madame de Ludre, maid of honour to the Queen, was a very beautiful girl whose flashing eyes captivated the King and kept him in thrall for two years. She then went into the country for a while, and returned yet more beautiful. The King gave her a pension in 1680, and some time later she retired to a convent. She was still a beauty at 70 years of age.

Ninon de L'Enclos was at this time 56 years old, yet she was still able to exert her charms and fascinate the son as she had done the father some twenty years before. She found the younger de Sévigné somewhat unsatisfactory, however, and observed that he had a heart "like a pumpkin fricasseed in snow."

LETTER XXX

Mademoiselle de Montgobert was Madame de Grignan's gentlewoman and companion, witty and vivacious, and able to tolerate some of the acerbities of her mistresses's nature.

LETTER XXXI

Vatel, one of the greatest cooks France has ever known, was at the time of his suicide employed at Chantilly, in the household of the Prince de Condé.

Gourville had been de la Rochefoucauld's valet de chambre and at this time was in Condé's service. Eventually he entered the household of Louis XIV, and became one of his most trusted confidants.

M. d'Hacqueville was one of those good-natured men whose lives seem spent in the service of others. He was especially devoted to Madame de Sévigné and her circle, kept them supplied with news when they were away from Paris, looked after their business for them, gave them sound advice, and patched up the petty quarrels that sometimes arose among them.

LETTER XXXII

The Rocks (Les Rochers) situated some three miles south of Vitré, in Brittany, was Madame de Sévigné's country estate. It had been settled on her by her husband and it ever remained her favourite residence. Throughout the letters there are constant references to her happiness and content when there. It was associated with her early married years, and the bringing up of the children, hence her remarks at the opening of this letter.

Mademoiselle du Plessis was the daughter of one of Madame de Sévigné's neighbours at The Rocks. She was a great admirer of

Madame, assiduous in her attentions to her, and immeasurably jealous of any who appeared more intimate than herself. This adoration was occasionally irksome, and Madame de Sévigné once observed to her daughter " vous ai-je parlé d'une lunette admirable ? . . . vous savez que par l'autre bout elle éloigne, et je tourne sur Mademoiselle du Plessis et je la trouve tout d'un coup à deux lieues de moi."

On one occasion Madame de Grignan slapped her face to show her resentment at Mlle. du Plessis's jealousy.

Abbé de la Mousse was a friend of the family, and on this occasion accompanied them to The Rocks. He was something of a philosopher, and discussed deep matters with his crony, the Abbé de Coulanges.

LETTER XXXIII

The de Simianes were neighbours of the de Grignans. In later years Paulina de Grignan married the Marquis de Simiane, who succeeded his father-in-law as Lieutenant-Governor of Provence.

LETTER XXXIV

Madame de Chaulnes was the wife of the Duke de Chaulnes, Governor of Brittany, whose opening of Parliament is described so graphically in these letters. A few years after this date de Chaulnes had to deal with the trouble caused by the exaction of the exorbitant taxes demanded of his people by Louis XIV. His measures were drastic—the gibbet, the wheel, and wholesale evictions were the means he took to obtain money that was to be lavished on Louis's harlots. Later he went to Rome to safeguard French interests during the conclave occasioned by the death of Innocent XI (1676), and it was said that he was influential in securing the election of Cardinal Ottoboni (Alexander VIII). In 1695 he was disgraced, and retired

to Chaulnes, in Picardy, where three years later he died, "regretté," according to Saint-Simon, "de tout le monde, et en Brettagne ce fut un deuil général." Madame de Chaulnes was a close friend of Madame de Sévigné, and from all accounts a most lovable woman.

LETTER XXXVII

Nicole; the writer is referring to Pierre Nicole, a distinguished Jansenist whose books of piety, sermons, and letters were widely read by Madame de Sévigné and her friends.

Monsieur d'Andilly was Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, son of the famous lawyer, Antoine Arnauld, and father of the Marquis de Pomponne.

LETTER XL

Abbé d'Effiat was a layman, friend of Fouquet, and brother to the Marquis de Cinq Mars, who was beheaded in 1642 for conspiring against Richelieu. His marriage did not take place, and he was banished to his estate of Veret, on the Loire, where he spent many years in exile.

M. d'Harrouïs was a cousin of Madame de Sévigné, and Treasurer of the *Etats* of Brittany. He seems to have been a tactless sort of person, extravagant and careless. His accounts of public money were hopelessly wrong; he owed the exchequer some 100,000 francs while he was living in luxury, and in 1675 built a mansion at Sailleraye, near Nantes, while the public were groaning under the burdens of excessive taxation. His carelessness over this house was colossal—"c'est un grand corps de logis de trente toises de face, deux ailes, deux pavillons; mais comme il n'y pas été trois fois pendant tout cet ouvrage, tout cela est mal exécuté. Notre abbé est au désespoir; M. d'Harrouïs ne fait qu'en rire"; thus writes Madame de Sévigné.

He ended his days in the Bastille (1699), after twelve years confinement within its walls.

Henri Arnauld, Bishop of Angers, was uncle of de Pomponne, and one of the most saintly priests in France. He lived to the great age of 95, and of him it was said that "loin de retrancher des fêtes du calendrier, il en ajouterait une."

The Bishop of Uzès, Jacques Adhémar de Monteil, was M. de Grignan's uncle, and brother of the Archbishop of Arles. He was superior of the Abbaye St. Georges sur Loire. He was a lovable man and a good counsellor to de Grignan and his wife.

LETTER XLI

The son now born to Madame de Grignan afterwards became Marquis de Grignan.

LETTER XLII

The new Madame, Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, married Monsieur, the Duke of Orleans, after the death of Henrietta of England.

LETTER XLIV

The Prince de Marsillac was the eldest son of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld.

Jacques Têtu, Abbé de Belval, was a member of the Academie, and a man of considerable parts. "C'était un homme plein de son propre mérite, d'un savoir médiocre, et d'un caractère à ne pas aimer la contradiction. Aussi ne goûtait-il pas le commerce des hommes; il aimer mieux briller seul au milieu d'un cercle de dames, auxquelles il imposait, ou qu'il flattait plus ou moins, selon qu'elles lui plaisaient," was the comment of a contemporary. He mixed much in society, and was generally known as the Ladies' Oracle.

LETTER XLVI

François de la Feuillade was a soldier of extraordinary courage but of mediocre military talent. He made up for this, however, by a remarkable ability to flatter Louis XIV, who created him a marshal of France, and heaped wealth and honours upon him. He was subsequently made governor of Dauphiné, and purchasing a large estate in Montmartre, pulled down a great number of houses to form a square that he named Place des Victoires, in the centre of which was a fine marble statue of the King. *See* Letter CXXX.

LETTER XLVII

Bajazet, first performed 4th January, 1672, was considered one of the best of Racine's plays.

Madame de Brissac was sister of the famous Saint-Simon, and an inveterate flirt. "Madame de Brissac avait aujourd'hui la colique," wrote Madame de Sévigné on one occasion, "elle était au lit, belle et coiffée à coiffer tout le monde." She died in 1684, aged 38.

LETTER XLVIII

"Borgia the Jesuit" was St. Francis Borgia, duke of Gandia, and third General of the Society. He died in 1572, and was canonized by Clement X in 1671.

LETTER XLIX

The Princess de Conti was the wife of Armand de Bourbon, brother of the great Condé, niece of Cardinal Mazarin and cousin to the Mancini sisters.

Anne Geneviève de Bourbon, Duchess de Longueville, was Madame de Conti's sister-in-law, and one of the famous women of Louis XIV's Court. In her youth she had shown great aptitude for diplomacy,

and was of considerable use to Mazarin in negotiations with Germany. She had a violent liaison with La Rochefoucauld, but eventually replaced him in her affections by the Duke de Nemours. She was one of the most active movers of the rebellion of La Fronde; after her disgrace over this and the desertion of her lovers, she took to religion and settled in Paris, where her devotion and piety became conspicuous. She became one of the leading figures at Port Royal, and died universally esteemed and regretted.

François Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois (1641–91) was war minister to Louis XIV, and it was largely due to his organization of the army that so many and such great victories were gained in the war of 1672–8. His severity was extreme, and it was owing to his influence that such cruelty was exercised in carrying out the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Louis had permitted the insertion of a clause allowing some slight liberty of conscience, but Louvois struck it out, with the observation, "Sa majesté veut qu'on fasse sentir les dernières rigueurs à ceux qui ne voudront pas se faire de sa religion."

LETTER L

The death of the poor chevalier refers to Charles-Philippe Adhémar de Monteil, Chevalier de Grignan, who died of small-pox in January, 1672. The title was then adopted by his brother, Joseph Adhémar de Monteil, who henceforth appears in Madame de Sévigné's letters as The Chevalier.

François de Neufville, Marquis de Villeroi (1644–1730), was the son of old Marshal Villeroi, who had fought with distinction in Flanders and had been tutor to Louis XIV. The Marquis was a man of indifferent parts, but his early friendship with the King served him in good stead, and despite his total military incapacity he was made a marshal in 1693.

Olympe Mancini, Countess de Soissons, one of the infamous Mancini sisters, had intrigued with Louis—having failed to capture

him as a husband—and, when he was tired of her, assisted in his amours elsewhere. Her plots and schemes, however, eventually led to the banishment of her and her husband to Champagne. Among her many lovers were de Vardes, Villeroi, and de Marsan. She was later mixed up in the La Voisin affair, and formally accused of having poisoned her husband, who died in 1673. Her sister de Bouillon was also implicated in this scandal, but, as appears in the Letter, acquitted herself valiantly at her trial, and left the Court in triumph. After this affair Olympe led a wandering and scandalous life about Europe.

The Chevalier de Lorraine was one of the favourites of the Duke of Orleans and, with his brother de Marsan, the sort of unprincipled rogue who would appeal to Monsieur.

LETTER LIII

The Count de Lude, Grand Master of the Artillery, one of Madame de Sévigné's earliest and closest friends, was said to have been in love with her; but, as one of her biographers says, "comme c'etait un de ces hommes dont l'attachement ne nuit point à la réputation des dames, Madame de Sévigné en plaisantait la première." He proved a gallant soldier in the campaign he was here setting out upon, and was made a duke in token of his services. After the death of his wife he married the widow of the Count de Guiche, one of those beauties who never fade—"les années coulent sur elle, comme l'eau sur la toile cirée," wrote Madame de Coulanges many years later.

LETTER LIV

Pierre Seguier (1588–1672) had been chancellor since 1656. He was a man of great learning, but of little significance from a political point of view. His animosity against Fouquet at his trial was strongly commented upon by Madame de Sévigné. *See* Letter IV.

LETTER LV

M. de Longueville was the son of Madame de Longueville, and his gallant death made some atonement for a life spent in debauchery and wastefulness.

LETTER LVI

Madame Colonna, Marie Mancini, had been an early mistress of Louis XIV, who had married her to the Constable Colonna. In 1672 she and her sister Hortense, Duchess de Mazarin, ran away from Colonna's palace in Rome in disguise, and made their way to Paris.

LETTER LVII

Madame de Sévigné's aunt, Henriette de Coulanges, Marquise de la Trousse, died of dropsy, at the age of 66.

LETTER LXIV

When the once independent principality of Orange revolted, in 1673, M. de Grignan laid siege to the town and, at the head of a small army of neighbouring nobles, reduced it to subjection.

LETTER LXV

The Count de Guiche, son of Marshal de Grammont, had led an adventurous life. In 1662 his association with Madame (Henrietta of England) led to a gross scandal, which occasioned his banishment from the kingdom. Amongst his other misdemeanours he had forged a letter purporting to come from the Queen of Spain, addressed to Louis XIV's young queen, informing her of the liaison between that king and Louise de la Vallière, and Louis never forgave him for this piece of impertinent folly.

LETTER LXVI

The Duke de Vivonne was Madame de Montespan's brother, a man of few principles, who, some years after the events mentioned in this letter, fell into disgrace for his shameless plundering of the Messinese during the Sicilian campaign.

The Chevalier de Vendôme was a brother of the Duke of that name and a man of no great consequence.

Mademoiselle Lavocat, afterwards Madame de Vins, was M. de Pomponne's sister-in-law.

LETTER LXVII

The beautiful Madame de Thianges was the fourth of the famous Mortemarts—Madame de Montespan, the Abbesse de Fontevrault, and the Duke de Vivonne—of whom Voltaire said, " Ces quatres personnes plaisaient universellement par un tour singulier de conversation, mêlé de plaisanterie, de naïveté et de finesse, qu'on appelait ' l'esprit de Mortemart '." She shared in the family honours, and married her daughters to the Duke de Nevers and the Duke de Sforza. She, herself, was constantly at Court with her sister de Montespan.

The Comtesse de Sanzei, mentioned towards the end of this gossipy letter, was sister of M. de Coulanges. Her husband was killed the following year at the siege of Treves, but for a long time she refused to believe in his death and expected him to return from captivity.

LETTER LXVIII

Mademoiselle de Blois, daughter of Louis and Louise de la Vallière, was at that time eight years old.

LETTER LXX

Cardinal Retz (1614–79) had been something of a clerical adventurer, and was largely responsible for the Fronde outbreak of 1648. The end of those disturbances might well have proved the end of Retz himself, but through astute management on the part of his friends, and a misapprehension on the part of the Pope, he was made a cardinal, and this strengthened his position. For some ten years, however, he wandered over France and Italy, as somewhat of an adventurer; but in 1662 he returned to Paris at Louis's invitation and spent the rest of his active life as a diplomat. Despite rich benefices he contracted enormous debts, which were only partly repaid at the time of his death.

LETTER LXXVII

The Duke de Lorges, nephew of Turenne, took command after the marshal's death, and conducted the retreating army, not without losses, over the Rhine. Count Raimonde Montecucculi was Turenne's great rival and opponent, and in this campaign showed himself at the summit of his skill.

LETTER LXXVIII

Unpleasant scandal connected the names of Monsieur and the Chevalier de Lorraine. The favourite had blighted the happiness of the first Duchess of Orleans, Henrietta of England, and since his recall from exile, mentioned in Letter L, the Chevalier had regained his old ascendancy over Monsieur. Despite the undoubted courage he showed during the Flanders campaign, Monsieur was a singularly effeminate creature. Most of his days were spent in his boudoir,

lounging on a couch or studying himself in a mirror. His greatest concern in life was the care of his complexion, and upon one occasion he burst into a torrent of tears because the Chevalier refused to give him the recipe of some wonderful pomade.

LETTER LXXIX

The *cordon-bleu* was the sky-blue ribbon of the Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Sainte Esprit, the Bourbon equivalent in exclusiveness to the English Order of the Garter.

LETTER LXXXI

Quanto and her *Friend* refers to Madame de Montespan and Louis, Moved by the representations of Father Bourdaloüe and Madame Scarron, governess to his children by de Montespan, the King decided to separate from his mistress. She was not long away, however, and, as we shall see, in July, 1676, returned to the royal favour.

LETTER LXXXIII

The Princess de Tarente, aunt of Madame and widow of the Duke de Tremouille, settled at Vitré after her husband's death and was the centre of society in that neighbourhood. She and Madame de Sévigné were good friends, and the Princess confided many of her domestic troubles to her.

LETTER XCIII

The Duke de Vermondois was Louis's son by Louise de la Vallière.

M. d'Armagnac belonged to the house of Henry of Lorraine, Duke of Harcourt, who had been given the countship of Armagnac in 1645.

Bourbon-Lancy, some 50 miles south-east of Nevers, had been made fashionable as a bathing resort by Richelieu, though the waters had been known for their medicinal value in Roman times.

LETTER XCV

The famous Brinvilliers case created a sensation unparalleled in France. Madeleine d'Aubray, Marquise de Brinvilliers, a pretty, clever, and utterly unscrupulous woman, had become involved in a scandalous liaison with an adventurer named Sainte-Croix, who imparted to her the knowledge of poisoning he had gained from a fellow-prisoner while immured in the Bastille. In 1666 she poisoned her father; then, to gain the money old M. d'Aubray had left them, she poisoned her two brothers. She then determined to kill her husband, and attempted to do so five times, but on each occasion Sainte-Croix foiled her by giving the poor wretch an antidote. Several other victims succumbed to her wiles, and finally Sainte-Croix himself was poisoned. Among his effects the police seized a casket containing a number of incriminating letters from Madame Brinvilliers, as well as from men who had benefited by her knowledge of poisoning to rid themselves of their enemies. La Brinvilliers fled to England, and thence to the Netherlands. After her flight one of her tools, La Chausée, was arrested and broken on the wheel. After much wandering La Brinvilliers took refuge in a convent in Liége, in March, 1676, and a few weeks later she was arrested. She tried in vain to take her life by poison and other methods, but she was brought to trial and condemned to torture and death. The terrible sentence was carried out in all its gruesome details, and on 17th July, 1767, she met her end.

LETTER XCVII

Poor little Marie-Blanche de Grignan was only five years old when she was put in charge of the Sisters of the Visitation, at Aix, in Provence, there to spend the remaining forty years of her life.

Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon, who has hitherto appeared in these letters as the widow of Scarron, the dramatist, was at this time 41 years old. Her husband had died in 1660. In 1669 she was engaged by Madame de Montespan to act as governess to her children by the King, the household being then established at Vaugirard. In 1674 Louis decided to have his children at Court, and Madame Scarron accompanied them. Her gentle nature and retiring disposition soon gained for her Louis's esteem; he chose her to read to him, and gradually admitted her more and more to his confidence. In 1678 he advanced her small estate of Maintenon, which she had bought with her savings while with Madame de Montespan, into a marquisate. From the first moment of her influence over the King she used it for the good of France and himself. Once she had finally succeeded in ousting Madame de Montespan from favour, she cleansed the Court of much of its looseness, made friends with the poor neglected Queen, who trusted her and liked her, and after that lady's death was secretly married to Louis (1685–6). Her subsequent life was in every way admirable, and to the end Louis depended upon her advice and support in practically everything he did. It was in 1686 that she founded the school for girls at St. Cyr, for which her name will be ever remembered, and it was thither she retired on her husband's death to spend the remainder of her life in seclusion.

LETTER XCIX

Henry, Duke of Montmorency, had a distinguished career in the army, and in 1630 was created a marshal of France. Two years later he took sides with Gaston, Duke of Orleans, and commanded the rebel army which was defeated by Schomberg at Castelnaudery. Montmorency was wounded, became a prisoner, and was executed as a traitor at Toulouse, 30th October, 1632.

LETTER CXVI

Madame de Montespan had returned after the temporary alienation caused by Madame de Maintenon's good counsel. During this time de Montespan had had recourse to magic, and by subtle means had contrived that Louis should be administered a love-potion. When she returned to Court, temporarily in greater favour than ever, she ascribed this to the efficacy of her potion.

LETTER CXX

Madame de Guénégaud was the widow of the Comte de Boufflers, and had been an intimate friend of Madame de Sévigné. Before her husband's disgrace at Court, she had presided over a brilliant circle at their chateau at Fresnes, near Pomponne.

Volume II

LETTER CXXI

The Hôtel de Carnavalet, in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, near the Place des Vosges, was hired by Madame de Sévigné in 1677, and for some years was occupied by her and the Grignans when they were in Town. She took it from a Madame de Lillebonne, wife of Count de Lillebonne. It was a large sixteenth century mansion, suitable to accommodate, on its several floors, the various families that from time to time stayed with Madame de Sévigné. There was good stabling and a charming garden. The Grignans furnished the floor occupied by themselves, and contributed substantially to the expenses of the establishment; when they were not in residence for any length of time Madame de Sévigné let part of the Hôtel to friends and relatives such as Corbinelli, La Trousse, and so forth. There she lived until 1689 or thereabouts, when straitened circumstances, brought about by her generosity to her children, necessitated her giving up the house and retiring to live with her son at The Rocks. The Hôtel Carnavalet is now a public museum.

LETTER CXXIII

Cosne, on the right bank of the Loire, has been a military centre from Roman times, and famous for its iron-works and hardware industry since the Middle Ages.

LETTER CXXV

Chaseu was Bussy Rabutin's estate in Burgundy, whither he had been exiled from Court.

Racine and Boileau-Despréaux were made historiographers royal at the same time and accompanied the King on several campaigns. They took elaborate notes, made elaborate sketches, and outlined elaborate histories, but nothing much came of it all. Racine observed that he considered the appointment "an act of the grace of God to detach him entirely from poetry"; Boileau's output sensibly decreased in quantity and value.

LETTER CXXVI

Michel Le Tellier (1603–85) owed his first promotion to Mazarin, who appointed him secretary of state for military affairs. After his elevation to the chancellorship he did much towards the better administration of France. He exercised a great influence over Louis, and was largely responsible for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He died a few days after the Revocation had been signed.

LETTER CXXVII

La Princesse de Clèves, Madame de la Fayette's masterpiece, appeared this year under the name of J. R. de Segrais, and critics have adjudged it the first of the modern novels of sentiment. It was quite a short work, and if for no other reason would, therefore, have compared favourably with the many-volumed romances of Mademoiselle de Scudéry.

LETTER CXXVIII

Madame de Coligny was Bussy's daughter, and the widow of the Marquis de Coligny, who died of fever while serving with Marshal Schomberg, but a little more than a year after their marriage. She

lived with her father in exile at Chaseu until 1681, when, to his amazement, he perceived that she was pregnant. His indignant inquiries elicited the fact that she had been secretly married to M. de la Riviere, in direct disobedience to her father, who had refused to sanction the match because de la Riviere " n'était pas gentilhomme "—probably a matter of heraldic quarterings. Bussy insisted upon his daughter disclaiming the marriage, and carried her off to Paris, under an assumed name, until she had lain in of her child. Then a strange thing happened ; not only Bussy, but his daughter repudiated both the marriage and the child, choosing rather to be branded as de la Riviere's mistress and the mother of his bastard than be known as the wife of a man of low estate. They then instituted a suit for the annulment of the marriage, but lost it, and the daughter was obliged to acknowledge her husband and child and pay a hundred francs to charity. She eventually came to an agreement with her husband, who allowed her to choose her place of residence, though he obliged her to cease calling herself Madame de Coligny. Later she changed her name to Comtesse d'Alets.

Versailles had originally been little more than a hunting lodge of Louis XIII. In 1661 his successor enlarged the small chateau, and a few years later began more extensive alterations which, in 1678, were put in charge of Mansart. A sum amounting to over £20,000,000 was spent on the palace and its grounds by Louis, who destroyed all the accounts so that no inquiries should be made. The King did not go into residence until 1682.

LETTER CXXXI

" The English physician," the Chevalier Talbot, was reputed to have introduced quinine into France, and for some time enjoyed a considerable vogue. " Son remède a fait des merveilles cette année," writes Madame de Sévigné, in 1680, " M. de Lesdiguières en a été guéri comme par miracle, et mille autres," and that same year he was called in to the Dauphin, as we read in Letter CLVIII

LETTER CXXXII

Mademoiselle de Méri, the daughter of Madame de la Trousse, was something of a chronic nervous invalid. She seems to have conceived a great liking to Madame de Sévigné, for she took a house near the Hôtel Carnavalet and eventually, in 1680, actually moved into the Hôtel itself, where she occupied Madame de Grignan's rooms when that lady was not there.

LETTER CXXXVI

Madame de Vins, née Lavocat, was the sister of Madame de Pomponne.

LETTER CXXXVII

Louis the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, was betrothed to Marie Anne Christine of Bavaria.

LETTER CXLI

Luxembourg's disgrace was said to be largely due to the jealousy of Louvois, who envied him his success in the campaign against the Prince of Orange.

The case of La Voisin resembled that of La Brinvilliers in the sensation it caused. Catherine Monvoisin, or La Voisin, was the captivating and witty wife of a haberdasher, and at an early age became implicated in witchcraft and sold herself to the Devil. Her success in the practice of magic soon drew the attention of many who

wanted her assistance to enable them to gratify unlawful desires or horrible vices. She acquired wealth and influence and gradually gathered around her a large circle of the most depraved and criminal characters in France. Coining, thieving, procuring, poisoning in all its branches, were practised by this gang, and before long the Lieutenant of Police had sufficient evidence to arrest La Voisin. Special powers were given by the King to a *Chambre Ardente*, created to solve the poisoning mysteries then growing in number. La Voisin made a confession in which she implicated priests who had celebrated the infamous Black Mass, and also gave the names of many to whom she had sold drugs to cause abortion, poison, ground diamonds, and the famous "succession powders", or a subtle poison very handy for heirs who were anxious to assist Nature in hastening the death of those who stood between them and their succession. After a long session the *Chambre Ardente* suddenly (23rd January, 1680) issued a warrant for the arrest of some 367 persons, including men and women of all classes of society. La Voisin now indulged in an orgy of confessions, implicating hundreds of people, including many of exalted rank, such as those whose names are mentioned by Madame de Sévigné. Marshal Luxembourg was accused of having bought poisons from La Voisin for the purpose of murdering his wife, Marshal de Créqui, and even, it was suggested, the King. So the excitement went on until La Voisin and some of her accomplices were sentenced to death and burned. After her death, however, those who were left continued the long series of confessions and implications, and Madame de Montespan, herself, was accused of having gone to La Voisin for magic, and of having taken part in the foulest rites of obscenity—all for the purposes of keeping Louis's love. When Louis succumbed to the charms of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, Montespan decided that both he and the girl must be killed, and she invoked the aid of La Voisin and another witch named La Trianon. The arrest of her tools saved Madame de Montespan for the moment, but when all this evidence came to light it finally killed Louis's love and, though he burned the incriminating confessions with his own hands, he had no more to do with his erstwhile mistress.

LETTER CXLII

The La T . . . mentioned in this latter was La Trianon, the sister-witch of La Voisin.

LETTER CXLVII

Madame de la Fayette had been the intimate friend of de la Rochefoucauld for some fifteen years, and the constancy and respectability which had throughout characterized the liaison robbed it of all scandal.

LETTER CLIV

The " wise and holy child " was Marie-Blanche de Grignan, who of her ten years' life had already been forced to spend five in a convent, and was now supposed to be resolved to spend the remainder of her existence there as a nun.

LETTER CLVII

The Coadjutor was de Grignan's brother, and coadjutor to his uncle, the bishop of Arles, whom he succeeded in 1689.

The Duke de Vendôme had been appointed Governor of Provence in 1670, but being too young for such work, he did not go near his province for ten years, leaving all the duties connected with the post to his Lieutenant Governor, the Count de Grignan. De Vendôme took up his residence there about the time of this letter.

LETTER CLXI

M. de Vardes had been banished from Court many years before for forging a letter purporting to be from the Queen of Spain to the Queen of France, apprising her of Louis's amours with Louise de la Vallière.

LETTER CLXVII

The little Marquis de Grignan, then aged 14, had just been presented at Versailles, and was very disappointed at the postponement of a masquerade occasioned by the Court mourning for Charles II of England.

LETTER CLXVIII

Pilois was Madame de Sévigné's gardener at The Rocks.

LETTER CLXXX

Louis Armand de Bourbon, Prince of Conti, was a nephew of the great Condé, and married to Mademoiselle de Blois, daughter of Louis XIV and Louise de la Vallière. He was only 25 when he succumbed to small-pox.

LETTER CLXXV

Charles de Coulanges, Seigneur de Saint-Aubin, was a younger brother of Madame de Sévigné's Abbé de Coulanges.

LETTER CLXXVII

De Barillon, French ambassador at London since 1671, was an old and esteemed friend of Madame de Sévigné, to whom he once observed, "Ceux qui vous aiment plus que moi, vous aiment trop." After the Revolution in England, he returned with great content to his friends in Paris.

LETTER CLXXIX

Marshal Schomberg, who has hitherto appeared in these letters as a victorious French general, had been obliged to leave France in 1685, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Under the great Turenne he had done good service in Spain, and upon his exile the Elector of Brandenburg was glad to obtain his services. With the Elector's permission he became second in command to William of Orange, in the invasion of England, and was later made a duke in the English peerage and given the Garter. He fought with varying success against James II in Ireland, and met his death while crossing the Boyne in the heat of that battle. He is buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, where there is a Latin inscription to him, written by Swift.

LETTER CLXXXI

In this letter, Madame de Sévigné and her friends go to St. Cyr to see the pupils at Madame de Maintenon's establishment perform Racine's *Esther*. This had been especially written at the desire of Madame de Maintenon, with music by Moreau, the Court composer, and was performed by the girls in one of their dormitories.

LETTER CLXXXII

The little Marquis's company was given him by the King. According to Dangeau's journal, " Les maréchaux de camp qui avaient des régiments ayant reçu l'ordre de s'en défaire, le roi donna au marquis de Grignan le régiment de son oncle, le chevalier."

LETTER CLXXXIII

M. d'Aiguebonne had been pressing a suit against M. de Grignan for some six years, but in 1688 it was decided against him. He appealed, failed again, and the affair was only finally settled in 1690 by de Lamoignon, the advocate general.

LETTER CLXXXIV

The Marquise de Marbœuf was the widow of a president at Rennes. She was intimate with Madame de Sévigné, used to stay with her in Paris and at The Rocks, and at the time of this letter was entertaining Madame while she was undergoing the Capuchin treatment for her rheumatism.

LETTER CLXXXIX

Coulanges had been sent to Rome with the Duke de Chaulnes to look after French interests during the conclave occasioned by the death of Innocent XI.

LETTER CXCIII

The battle of Fleurus was fought on 1st July, 1690, between the French under Luxembourg, and the Allied Dutch, Spanish, and Imperial armies under George Frederick of Waldeck. It was a brilliant victory for the French, who swept their enemies from the field and captured over 8,000 prisoners.

LETTER CXCVIII

This Mademoiselle de Blois, who married the Duke of Chartres, and later became Duchess of Orleans, was the daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan, who had obtained for her child the title that had formerly been borne by the daughter of Louise de la Vallière.

" My dear niece D'Alets " is, as has already been explained, the daughter of Bussy, formerly known as Madame de Coligny.

LETTER CCIV

Lauzun's wife, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, had died in 1693 ; at the time of this letter he was 63, and his new bride, Mademoiselle de Lorges, was barely 14.

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